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**THE FILIPINO WAY OF WAR:
IRREGULAR WARFARE THROUGH THE CENTURIES**

by

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December 2011

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**THE FILIPINO WAY OF WAR:
IRREGULAR WARFARE THROUGH THE CENTURIES**

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ABSTRACT

The Filipino Way of War is the dominant irregular warfare strategy executed by the Filipino warrior throughout the centuries. Armed with severely limited resources, a strong fighting spirit, and deep traditions, the Filipino warrior has always had to look for another method of warfare other than direct and total war. This has led to the indirect path, the path of irregular warfare. This tradition, built upon a foundation of tribal warfare, shaped by resistance to Spanish and American colonization, and honed during the guerrilla campaign against the Japanese occupation, has emerged in the modern era as the predominant Filipino military strategy. Entering the 21st century, conflict in the Philippines has not been focused on external invaders, but on internal division. In this era, both government and anti-government forces have recalled their traditions and experiences and predominantly used irregular warfare strategies, often through unconventional warfare, insurgency, or special operations. As external military influences wane, it is important to understand and prepare the Armed Forces of the Philippines for the future by understanding their past history, so that the Filipino warrior will be better prepared for tomorrow.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AFPSOF	Armed Forces of the Philippines Special Operations Forces
AFPJSOG	Armed Forces of the Philippines Joint Special Operations Group
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
AQ	Al Qaeda
BAR	Browning Automatic Rifle
BCT	Battalion Combat Team
BIAF	Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces
CAF	Cagayan Apayao Forces
CAFGU	Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit
CBT OPN	Combat Operations
CC	Central Committee
CHCD	Clear, Hold, Consolidate, Develop
CMO	Civil Military Operations
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CONOP	Concept of the Operation
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
DA	Direct Action
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
FRGU	Front Regional Guerrilla Unit
FSRR	First Scout Ranger Regiment
GBC	Guerrilla Base Commands

GOCC	Government Owned and Controlled Corporations
GPS	Global Positioning System
GRP	Government of the Republic of the Philippines
GWOT	Global War on Terror
HUK	Hukbalahap
IDAD	Internal Defense and Development
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
INTEL	Intelligence
ISO	Internal Security Operations
IW	Irregular Warfare
IWJOC	Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept
JCET	Joint Combined Exchange Training
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
JSOTF-P	Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines
JUSMAG	Joint United States Military Advisory Group
KIA	Killed in Action
LGAF	Lapham Guerrilla Armed Forces
LRB	Light Reaction Battalion
LRC	Light Reaction Company
MAA	Military Assistance Act
MBA	Military Bases Agreement
MDT	Mutual Defense Treaty
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MIM	Mindanao Independence Movement
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front

MOUT	Military Operations in Urban Terrain
MRGU	Main Regional Guerrilla Unit
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NDA	National Defense Act
NDF	National Democratic Front
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NISP	National Internal Security Plan
NPA	New People's Army
NVG	Night Vision Goggles
OEF-A	Operation Enduring Freedom Afghanistan
OEF-P	Operation Enduring Freedom Philippines
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
OPLAN	Operations Plan
PA	Philippine Army
PACOM	Pacific Command
PASFRA	Philippine Army Special Forces Regiment (Airborne)
PASOCOM	Philippine Army Special Operations Command
PC	Philippine Constabulary
PEFTOK	Philippine Expeditionary Force to Korea
PHILCAGV	Philippine Civil Action Group to Vietnam
PHILCONV	Philippine Contingent to Vietnam
PI	Philippines
PKP	Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas
PNP	Philippine National Police
POW	Prisoner of War

PSYOP	Psychological Operations
R+D	Research and Development
ROE	Rules of Engagement
ROTC	Reserve Officer Training Corps
RSIM	Rajah Solaiman Islamic Movement
SEAL	Sea Air Land Team
SF	Special Forces
SOC PAC	Special Operations Command Pacific
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOT	Special Operations Team
SOTF-B	Special Operations Task Force Basilan
SPSG	Southern Philippine Secessionist Groups
SR	Special Reconnaissance
SRTU	Scout Ranger Training Unit
SWAT	Special Weapons and Tactics
TC	Territorial Commission
TOR	Terms of Reference
TSCP	Theatre Security Cooperation Plan
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
USAFFE	United States Armed Forces Far East
USAFIP	United States Armed Forces in the Philippines
USAFIP-NL	United States Armed Forces in the Philippines Northern Luzon
USASF	United States Army Special Forces
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USDOD	United States Department of Defense

USSF	United States Special Forces
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
UW	Unconventional Warfare
VFA	Visiting Forces Agreement
WESTMINCOM	Western Mindanao Command
WPO	War Plan Orange

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. INTROSPECTION

It has become cliché, in the 21st century, that in order to achieve success in most endeavors it is of the utmost importance that one must have an intimate understanding of their own personal makeup. This idea, applied to military philosophy, is commonly credited to Sun Tzu and believed to have been written somewhere around 500 B.C., translated as “Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril. When you are ignorant of the enemy but know yourself, your chances of winning and losing are equal.”¹ Though the original impact of this statement may not resonate as tremendously now as it did then, this idiom of understanding still holds very true. To understand your personal makeup is to set yourself on a continuous path towards self-improvement. Introspection is vitally important; it allows us to evaluate our successes and, more importantly, our failures. Then from the lessons we learn and grow, we adapt and proceed. Understanding where a person comes from – their background, heritage, and culture – helps to understand where they are going. This concept is just as important (if not more so) for the soldier as for any other. For war is life and death; and in this, if the soldier understands himself, then he can plan, prepare, and decide action more effectively. The action will be more appropriate to his ability, but still ultimately lead to the desired goal of success in war.

If the axiom of the soldier understanding himself or herself holds true for personal success in war, then this same concept should be applied to military organizations at all levels – from the individual, to the squad, battalion, division, army, and every level in between. Introspection of past organizational action will always benefit the organization as a whole. Through this analysis, the military organization can better understand its own traditions and manner of fighting – in other words, its way of war. The idea that a military organization may show consistency of habit in the manner that war is fought follows this analytical line of thought. A military organization must look to its past to see

¹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, translated and with an introduction by Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 84.

how it will face the future. ² The *Filipino Way of War* is the idea that a deep tradition of irregular warfare is present throughout the history of Filipino warfare, and that in the future the Filipino warrior can look to this tradition for solutions to the fights that present themselves.

The purpose of this thesis is to conduct an exploratory study of the military strategy that has been employed by Filipinos in warfare. From the earliest days of barangay battles to the modern conflicts against the gambit of nebulous, ideological, trans-national, state, and non-state threats, understanding how Filipinos fought in the past will better prepare Filipinos to fight in the future. By identifying and understanding the building blocks, genetic DNA, and evolution of strategy for the Army of the Republic of the Philippines, we will generate recommendations for how to proceed with a continued positive evolution. This study will benefit both the Philippine as well as the American militaries, which have been so greatly interwoven throughout the last century, and will continue to be far into the next.

In 1973, Russell F. Weigley published his seminal work, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*. The work is a detailed study of how Americans have defined, studied, and applied military strategy from the founding of the nation to his date of publication. Weigley's conclusion is a well-respected account of how, generally, American military men have focused their thinking on military strategy at the tactical and operational levels, and rarely at the strategic level. This led to the default American strategic level strategy used until the Cold War, which was to apply military power not "to attain political ends, except as the nation used force in wartime openly and directly in pursuit of military victories as complete as was desired or possible."³ In application, this amounted to Clausewitz's "total war," the overwhelming application of resources and military power to annihilate the enemies' military power. When done, America could then impose its will with little resistance. Weigley concludes that even when faced with a Clausewitzian "limited war" scenario,

² Dr. John Arquila, Chairman, Department of Defense Analysis, Naval Postgraduate School, in discussion with the authors, August 2011.

³ Russell Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), xix.

America still defaulted to the goal of total annihilation of enemy military power, ignoring more political and less direct use of military power to achieve goals. These mismatches of objective and strategy can obviously have serious repercussions. It can be argued that even to this day, America has had more than its share of pain in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, because when goals are not clear, the U.S. military will default to do what it is designed best to do, high intensity annihilation-style warfare.

Understanding how the American military has evolved and fought in past wars was critical to Weigley, because he believed that “what we believe and do today is governed at least as much by the habits of mind we formed in the relatively remote past as by what we did and thought yesterday. The relatively remote past is apt to constrain our thoughts and actions more because we understand it less well than we do our recent past, or at least recall it less clearly, and it has cut deeper grooves of custom in our minds.”⁴ Therefore, by truly analyzing and understanding why America has chosen past strategies, the military can more effectively choose strategy in the future.

A similar theoretical idea will be applied in this thesis, not to dispute the *American Way of War*, but to identify the *Filipino Way of War*. When Weigley wrote his treatise on American strategy, he had little American strategic writing available to work with. He therefore states that he was forced to study “a history of ideas expressed in action.”⁵ Just as Weigley traced the American model from the very beginning of the formation of the American nation state, this thesis will begin at a time when the islands that now make up the Republic of the Philippines were not a single nation state, but a collection of separate and distinct nations without a state. This was a time when loyalties lay with the barangay (or village), the tribe, and the family.⁶ The study will trace the Filipino military idea of strategy by studying the military action of Filipinos from these early beginnings through the colonial period, to independence, and into the present day, all the while following the formation and evolution of the Philippine nation state.

⁴ Weigley, *The American Way of War*, xx.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Cesar P. Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People* (Quezon City Philippines: New Day Publishers, 2000), 2–4.

B. IRREGULAR WARFARE STRATEGY

The overarching theme to Russell Weigley's study is that, in the broadest terms, there are generally two types of military strategy.⁷ These for the most part fall in line with Clausewitz's own writings on war. First, that the object of war is "to compel the enemy to do our will,"⁸ and that because war is "a continuation of political intercourse, carried on by other means....the political objective is the goal, war is the means of reaching it."⁹ Therefore, depending on the chosen political goal and the ability of a military to force its will, the war can either be a total war, where annihilation and occupation are the end-state, or a limited war, where the goal is something less than annihilation and occupation.¹⁰ Weigley concludes his introduction by summarizing the German military historian Hans Delbruck, whom he says draws upon Clausewitz's distinction between the two kinds of war.¹¹

Delbruck suggests that there are two kinds of military strategy: the strategy of annihilation, which seeks to overthrow the enemy's military power: and the strategy of attrition, exhaustion, or erosion, which is usually employed by a strategist whose means are not great enough to permit pursuit of the direct overthrow of the enemy and who therefore resorts to the indirect approach.¹²

Weigley makes a solid case that, due to there always being a plethora of resources and means available to the United States military, the resulting American way of war is then a deep tradition of fighting an annihilation-style total war. The U.S. commonly uses a direct application of overwhelming force and resources against any military problem, even when, as stated previously, annihilation is not the proper solution. It can be generalized that this is exactly the situation the American military found itself in during the war in Vietnam. The United States military, faced with an insurgent war of political

⁷ Weigley, *The American Way of War*, xxii.

⁸ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 75.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁰ Clausewitz, *On War*, 90–99.

¹¹ Weigley, *The American Way of War*, xxii.

¹² *Ibid.*

movement, chose the strategy that had served itself so well in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War: “big units, traditional tactics, and overwhelming firepower.”¹³ The result is well documented, and generally serves as a modern day lesson on how not to counter insurgent political warfare. Delbruck’s first strategy is the essence of the modern military definition of conventional warfare, employment of large units, using traditional tactics and the nine principles of war against an enemy.¹⁴ The characteristics of conventional warfare will be fundamental to this study by providing the contrast used to identify irregular warfare. Large units, divisions, fleets, air wings, heavily resourced joint combined arms maneuver warfare, quick decisive victories, the pursuit of new technologies, and annihilation goals are the characteristics of conventional warfare. Specifically, the difference between attrition and annihilation will be important in differentiating between conventional and irregular warfare. Annihilation, being the complete destruction of an enemy’s ability to resist having their wills changed, versus attrition, which is the wearing down of an enemy until they then decide to change their own will. An irregular warrior, with limited means to annihilate their enemy, will always resort to a strategy of wearing down the enemy because there is no other option.

The Filipino warrior has consistently either chosen or been forced, by lack of resources and military might, to resort to something that falls within the realm of Delbruck’s second strategy. The more commonly used modern military term for the strategy of the warrior who does not engage in conventional warfare is *irregular warfare*.

Recently Dr. John Arquilla, the chair of the U.S. Special Operations Command-funded Department of Defense Analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School, published a book that studies irregular warfare leaders from history who have left a significant impact on warfare.¹⁵ In his study, Dr. Arquilla first presents the definition and the characteristics of irregular warfare. This definition then becomes the parameter he uses to identify and rate the irregular warfare masters.

¹³ John Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits: How Masters of Irregular Warfare Have Shaped Our World* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011), 6.

¹⁴ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 3-0 Operations* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, Feb 2008), Appendix A: Principles of War and Operations, A-1.

¹⁵ Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, preface.

The study of this field is markedly relevant, as the American wars in the first decade of the 21st century have created a palpable buzz and a business of trying to understand and compete in irregular warfare. That being said, there continues to be debate and confused descriptions of what irregular warfare is, who conducts it, what its purpose is, and where the lines between irregular and conventional are drawn, if any. This inability for irregular warfare to be consistently described arises from the fact that it, in itself, as Dr. Arquilla states, is one of greatest complexities of armed conflicts.¹⁶ Irregular warfare arises from a situation where at least one of the combatants is at a disadvantage; where one or the other does not possess the means or the military might to challenge their rival directly.¹⁷ This environment often puts one of the belligerent's back against the wall, where it seems that no other option is available. This is often where human creativity and innovation rise to the occasion. New tactics and strategies are developed. Technologies, which previously had been unconsidered, are given their chance, and abnormal risks are taken because there is no option for direct conventional war. Because of this concept, and because the "age old pattern of action reaction in military affairs persists,"¹⁸ the environment, means, and methods used in irregular warfare are constantly changing, often even before the steady state can be identified.

Despite the complexity, Dr. Arquilla is able to firmly describe irregular warfare. His definition includes three fundamental characteristics. First, that irregular warfare is conducted by small units, whereas conventional warfare is characterized by large formations of armies, fleets, and wings. Secondly, that the tactics of irregular warfare are appropriate to small units in their many forms and names, whether they be guerrillas, commandos, insurgents, Green Berets, terrorist cells, etc. Lastly, Dr. Arquilla describes the third leg of his "irregular warfare triad" simply as terrorism.¹⁹

Several additional facts add to the complexity. First, irregular warfare can be conducted by large standing militaries, as well as it can be by any other form of warring

¹⁶ Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, 3.

¹⁷ Weigley, *The American Way of War*, xxii.

¹⁸ Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, 13.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4–5.

party one can imagine. This fact is corroborated by the large amount of effort that the U.S. military has recently put into understanding, then adapting the standing force to conduct and master irregular warfare. In January of 2009, the U.S. Department of Defense (USDOD) released its Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review Report. In the report are outlined the six core mission areas. These are considered to be “relatively enduring missions; they are necessary for achieving strategic end states derived from the 2008 *National Defense Strategy*; they constitute a broad military activity; they describe a unique Department of Defense capability and capacity; or they identify a mission for which the Defense Department is the U.S. Government lead and/or provides the preponderance of U.S. Government capabilities.”²⁰ The core mission areas are: 1) Homeland Defense and Civil Support, 2) Deterrence Operations, 3) Major Combat Operations, 4) *Irregular Warfare*, 5) Military Support to Stabilization Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations, 6) Military Contribution to Cooperative Security.²¹ The addition of irregular warfare by a military with a deep tradition of conventional, high intensity, annihilation warfare is a telling sign of its perceived importance.

Furthermore, although seemingly a reactionary effort to friction in the GWOT, as well as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the USDOD has also published two versions of the Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept (IWJOC) (version 1.0 in 2007, and version 2.0 released in 2010). Both studies contain a detailed attempt to define the irregular warfare environment, problem, approach, activities, operations, methodologies, and requirements.²² The IWJOC even goes as far as laying out what irregular warfare operations the U.S. will conduct in order for the U.S. Special Operations Command, the lead agency for irregular warfare in USDOD, to plan and organize units against the tasks. These missions include: Counterterrorism, Unconventional Warfare (U.S. resistance and

²⁰ USDOD, “Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review Report, 2009” (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 2009)

²¹ Ibid., 5–6.

²² Joint Staff, “Irregular Warfare, Joint Operating Concept 1.0” (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 2007)

Joint Staff, “Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats, Joint Operating Concept 2.0” (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 2010)

insurgent activities designed to overthrow an enemy government or occupying power), Foreign Internal Defense (support to a friendly government to resist subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency), Counterinsurgency, and Stability Operations.²³ These efforts are proof that irregular warfare can be conducted by a large, well-resourced, highly technical, standing military just as easily as they can by a farmer squatting in the jungle with an assault rifle and little motivation. Unsurprisingly, the recent U.S. IWJOC is very threat focused, often portraying irregular warfare as a defensive option only to be taken against those enemies who are conducting irregular warfare against the U.S. This is untrue; irregular warfare can be used by big militaries, in the offensive, preemptive, or as a first response, against irregular and conventional enemies. Though irregular warfare can be conducted by well-resourced groups, it is more commonly the strategy of the under resourced. Likewise, when there is some form of asymmetric advantage between two sides, either the strong or the weak side can choose to use irregular warfare based upon their goals. In an era of constrained budgets, irregular warfare will be a cost saving measure. If limited goals can be achieved with a properly executed political/unconventional warfare campaign, then why commit large expensive formations, fleets, and wings?

A second complexity that Dr. Arquilla establishes is that the lines between irregular warfare and conventional warfare are often blurred. Not only do many of the conventional warfare principles apply to irregular warfare, but irregular warfare and conventional warfare can coexist, and even be conducted simultaneously by the same combatant.²⁴

It is important to understand the distinctions and differences between conventional and irregular warfare strategy, in order to identify or discern a way of war that relies on one or the other. This study will extract six characteristics of warfare strategy from Dr. Arquilla's definition of irregular warfare (Figure 1): 1) the size of units involved, 2) how well they are supported or resourced, 3) the type of doctrine or tactics employed, 4) the effect, 5) the objective, and 6) the force's perspective on technology.

²³ Joint Staff, "Irregular Warfare, Joint Operating Concept 1.0," 7, 17–24.

²⁴ Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, 8–12.

Conventional warfare, because of its place in history, commonly seems to be an easier concept to grasp than irregular warfare, with its more nebulous nature. However, when placed in direct comparison, the stark contrast between the two offers a solid range of characteristics to identify irregular warfare. These ideas and definitions will be paramount to understanding how the Filipino warrior and the Philippine Army have evolved their use of strategy in warfare throughout the centuries.

	Conventional Warfare		Irregular Warfare
Units	Large (Divisions, Fleets, Wings)	↔	Small (Cellular, Light, Fast)
Supported	Well Resourced	↔	Comparatively Under Resourced
Doctrine	Joint Combined Arms Maneuver Warfare	↔	Guerrilla Tactics, Insurgency, Terrorism, Special Operations
Effect	Quick and Decisive	↔	Protracted and Slow Burning
Objective	Annihilation	↔	Attrition
Technology	New Weapons Development	↔	Leverage what is Available

Figure 1. Conventional and irregular warfare characteristics comparison

In order to flesh out these characteristics from Filipino military history, we will organize and detail the different eras of Filipino warfare, pre-colonial, colonial, Japanese occupation, post-independence and war on terror, into three categories. These categories, organization of forces, tactics / doctrine, and attitude towards technology will allow us to organize and identify the characteristics from Figure 1.

These characteristics and divisions are certainly not all encompassing, or a disqualifying factor, in the identification of either strategy of war. For example, conventional forces often will use characteristics this study has attributed to irregular warfare. Hypothetically, this could be seen in a scenario where two evenly matched conventional forces might fight for a goal of attrition because annihilation is not possible.

A conventional force may also leverage existing technology, but it may also seek new weapons for gaining advantage. Less likely is the reverse: irregular warfare forces exhibiting conventional warfare characteristics. It is unlikely that a true irregular force would conduct joint combined arms maneuver warfare, or use fleets, divisions, or air wings. These are characteristics reserved for conventional forces. However, this is not a black and white comparison; there will be mixes, hybrids, crossover, and blurring in all aspects. The key, and importance, of using these characteristics is to make a diagnosis of what has (and is happening) on battlefields. When a warrior has the knowledge and ability to identify irregular warfare strategy, they then can harness it for lethality and success, or defeat it with efficiency.

C. THE FILIPINO WAY OF WAR

Warfare conducted by the Filipino warrior has been consistently dominated by irregular warfare strategies. While there have been conventional warfare operations, the overwhelming characteristics of Filipino operations fall strongly into the category of irregular warfare. Generally, warfare in the Philippines can be separated into five specific periods of warfare: pre-colonial, colonial (which can be further broken down into the Spanish and American periods), Japanese occupation, post-independence, and the Global War on Terror. In each of these periods, small units using insurgent, guerrilla, or special operations tactics have conducted the majority of operations.

In 1971, Philippine Army Major Robert T. Yap-Diangco published a study titled *The Filipino Guerrilla Tradition*. His study presents an idea that the prevalence of guerrilla warfare (a term that, he states, has “often been used indiscriminately to describe an irregular form of warfare”²⁵) is the result of socio-political, religious, and economic milieu that are common throughout the history of the Philippines.²⁶ These stated conditions create a situation where one or more entities are under resourced, or are under cared for socially. Because these populations have goals or aspirations, they are therefore in competition. In the Philippines, this competition has come in the form of warfare

²⁵ Robert Yap-Diangco, *The Filipino Guerrilla Tradition* (Manila: MCS Enterprises, Inc., 1971), 129.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

against each other, and more dominantly, against colonial occupiers. Because in warfare annihilation is the goal and survival the highest priority, under-resourced entities must always default to a strategy of survival, and attempt military victory by others means. The most dominant characteristic which leads to the development of guerrilla warfare is a level of economic subsistence. Those populations with lower levels have a higher inclination for guerrilla war. Yap-Diango concludes that, up until the time of writing his study, Filipino guerrilla warfare had been conducted for national liberation. He warns that it is important to continue to analyze the “social-political and economic discontents which invariably create strain in the existing relationship between military and civilian entities.”²⁷

Major Yap-Diango’s study is important because it concludes two key points: that guerrilla warfare is a result of one side having a significant lack of resources in competition with another, and that this disparity threatens the survival of the guerrilla. This resource asymmetry puts the guerrilla’s survival at stake, because if the guerrilla is identified, then the anti-guerrilla will be at a significant advantage. In open combat, the better resourced is generally at an advantage, making up for any organizational weakness with resources. Because Filipinos have consistently operated militarily with fewer resources than their enemies have, they often have resorted to an irregular warfare strategy.

An important aspect of the Filipino irregular warfare thread is that each period reinforced what was learned in the previous. Filipinos began with a solid, irregular warfare, tribal base. Following this were two long and significant periods of irregular warfare against foreign occupiers, Spain and America. In each of these two periods, resources were limited, and Filipinos were forced onto the indirect path – the irregular warfare path. The Japanese occupation during World War II was almost industrial guerrilla warfare in its intensity, and few Filipinos were unaffected by the brutality of this war. The awfulness of guerrilla warfare became commonplace, and Filipinos became quite good at it. After the Japanese occupation, there was a significant change in conditions that should be addressed. Specifically that, other than during the pre-

²⁷ Yap-Diango, *The Filipino Guerrilla Tradition*, 132.

colonial/tribal era, Filipinos had been fighting outsiders, and not resolving internal strife and divisions. These internal divisions were put on the backburner until independence was gained. Thus, after 1945, Filipinos found themselves trying to resolve the problems of their national identity. Resources were still very much lacking on both the pro-government and anti-government sides. The government was supported by the United States, but because the U.S. was overwhelmingly resourced for the Cold War, they could not support the Philippine government to the necessary capacity. The anti-government forces returned to what they knew, and what they were good at, to their traditions of irregular warfare. The next 60 years would be marked by a series of irregular warfare conflicts fought throughout the islands.

By going back into history and studying the actions which have taken place, we will identify and prove this deep tradition of Filipino irregular warfare. In order to actually constitute a way of war, an action must be observed over time. This thesis will begin in the pre-colonial era, roughly 1000 A.D. to 1500 A.D., and then travel through the colonial era and into the 20 and 21 centuries. During these periods, we will look at the military action undertaken by the people of the Philippines Islands, to see if they contain the characteristics of irregular warfare and fit Dr. Arquilla's irregular warfare definition.

As previously stated, this will be done through an analysis of the organizational structures used, the doctrines, and the attitudes towards technology. For example, was the organization large and conventional, or small and cellular? How were recruiting, communications, and intelligence conducted? Were the common organizational designs essentially more oriented for irregular warfare, or for traditional conventional battle? The study of tactics and doctrine will expose the irregular warfare characteristics of strategy, goals, and effects. The third area that this thesis will look at is the attitude towards technology over time. Did the Filipino warrior try to advance and develop new weapons of war to win the day, or did they adapt to their limited means and leverage an advantage using existing technologies.²⁸ By using these three criteria and matching them to the characteristics of irregular warfare, including the three legs of irregular warfare (small

²⁸ Dr. John Arquilla, Chairman, Department of Defense Analysis, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, in discussion with authors, August 2011.

units, guerrilla / insurgent tactics, and terrorism), a clear thread of irregular warfare will be seen throughout every period in Filipino history.

Warfare on the islands of the Philippines in pre-colonial times (before 1500) was brutal and savage. Marked by the use of edged hand weapons, and conducted in close quarters face to face, the violence was emotional, personal, and ferocious. Loyalties lay with the barangay chieftain and his family. Common were barangay raids conducted by the males of a nearby barangay. Occasionally barangays would ally, but often the motivation was for reasons such as subsistence, revenge, glory, and pride.²⁹ This period would form the base that the following three periods would be built on. Traditions of loyalty, honor, a savage style of fighting, and cellular structure would be carried by the people for centuries. This may be considered the “irregular warfare DNA” of the Filipino warrior.

Throughout the Spanish and American colonial periods (1521–1941), the use of irregular and conventional tactics was common for both the colonials and the indigenous. These periods were times of learning irregular warfare. Lessons, such as the idea that going toe to toe against better-resourced forces would result in defeat, would be hard learned. The colonial periods were very much the adolescent years of Filipino irregular warfare culture. The Spanish and American forces had more success with conventional operations than their Filipino opponents, due to their ability to resource the armies and dominate the conventional battlefield with superior firepower. Conversely, the Filipinos had significant success with guerrilla/insurgent tactics, owing to their ability to move freely, gain intelligence, recruit, and operate in a true guerrilla environment.³⁰ Filipino attempts at conventional warfare were often premature, costly, and bloody. This lack of success in conventional warfare further fused into the psyche of the Filipino warrior that irregular warfare was the one true way of success.³¹ In a common characteristic of irregular warfare, without the ability to claim success on the battlefield through

²⁹ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 2–5.

³⁰ Ibid, 15–69.

³¹ David J. Silbey, *A War of Frontier and Empire: The Philippine American War, 1899–1902* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007)

conventional means, Filipino guerrillas dug in for protracted, small-scale conflicts.³² However, the U.S.-directed development of the AFP was more along the lines of the American conventional model, due to the ultimate success of the era's foreign conventional warfare tactics.

By 1935, the Philippines was declared a commonwealth by the United States, but true independence would have to wait.³³ For in December of 1941, following their declaration of war and surprise attack at Pearl Harbor, the Japanese began attacking American and Philippine military targets in the archipelago. By the spring of 1942, the Japanese had pushed most major American assets off the islands and captured the final American/ Filipino allied holdouts at Bataan and Corregidor.³⁴ However, the following occupation of the Philippines by the Japanese would be no easy task. Filipinos, now on the run with their former colonial occupiers, fell back into the jungle and began to wage a successful guerrilla campaign. Many different and independent insurgent units fought to harass and expel the invaders from the islands. Filipino Scouts, Hukbalahap communist guerrillas, and un-captured Filipino and American units all participated in the irregular warfare waged until the Allies could amass enough military might and return to expel the Japanese main force units through conventional means.³⁵ The guerrilla warfare campaign during the Japanese occupation is likened here to a finishing school for guerrillas. Taking their historical traditions and lessons learned, the Filipinos fought the Japanese harder than they fought any other foreign occupier. These were difficult years, marked by brutal violence against the Japanese and themselves. The guerrillas and guerrilla units, which survived these years, were hardened to the task and carried their skills into the next generation of conflict.

After World War II, the Filipino people gained their long-sought independence, and with it, a completely new series of internal conflicts. While the Republic of the Philippines was now an independent nation state, the country continued to be culturally

³² Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, 9.

³³ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 195–203.

³⁴ John Costello, *The Pacific War 1941–1945* (New York: Perennial, 1981), 171–213.

³⁵ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 308–351.

and politically disunited. With many well-armed guerrilla organizations still in existence on the islands, the violent struggle toward political goals continued. The government was seen as weak, and the irregular warfare traditions surged. These were the first adult years for Filipino guerrilla traditions. Built upon many centuries, the Filipino warrior now found himself using his irregular warfare skills against other Filipinos. Furthermore, the nation was still not free from American influence. While the U.S. had granted autonomous rule, American business and military influence was still strong throughout these transition years.³⁶ The United States continued to maintain large naval and air bases on the Philippine islands. As World War II ended and the Cold War heated up, the Pacific theatre continued to be a front line. Under the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951, the United States and the Philippines were committed to an alliance to defend each other from any external threat. In application, this meant that the United States would secure the Philippines and respond to any invasion, but in return would use the Philippines as a key lager and staging area. The U.S. and the Philippines maintained a robust cooperative alliance during this time, with the Philippine army even contributing to the U.S. wars in Korea and Vietnam.³⁷ Out of this relationship was the largest period of conventional growth for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Resourced, trained, and mentored by the United States, the AFP developed their conventional capabilities for future Cold War combat. Simultaneously, though on the home front, the Philippine nation faced a more immediate threat. For the next fifty years after World War II, the Philippine Nation would be engaged with one internal insurgency after another. First, the Huk communist rebellion in 1946–1954,³⁸ followed by the New People’s Army (NPA) from 1969 onwards, challenged the internal ruling factions of the Philippines. Outside of the communist insurgency problem, there was also a growing Islamic revolution in the Southern Islands among the Moro population. This would produce guerrilla organizations

³⁶ Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945–1991* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 99–100.

³⁷ Ibid., 100–101.

³⁸ Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Pub. Inc., 1977), xix-xxiv.

such as the Moro National Liberation Front, and the splinter Moro Islamic Liberation Front, each of which has been active in the 1970s through today.³⁹

Homegrown insurgents, secessionists, and rebels would routinely use all facets of irregular warfare, including terrorism, in battle against the AFP. The AFP would learn many hard lessons on how to deal with insurgency. Throughout the campaigns, the AFP would occasionally use conventional tactics to counter the insurgent threats. Over time, the recognition that these were not working would become clear. The conventional tactics were ineffective against the guerrillas, and they isolated the population from the government, often forcing a neutral population firmly into the anti-government camp with the government's use of heavy-handed tactics. The AFP slowly developed population-centric counterinsurgency tactics, combined with special operations, and these structured conventional operations would turn the tide for the government. Adding the Filipino understanding that counterinsurgency was a whole government problem, and not strictly a military one, created a holistic attitude to solve the population's grievances combined with a smart security strategy. The AFP had adopted a conventional mindset from the U.S., but ultimately settled for a more balanced method of warfare that also included tradition and experience. Many of these holistic, hybrid, irregular/conventional strategy lessons continue to be used with success to this day.⁴⁰

Moving towards the end of the 20th century and into the first decade of the 21st century, the problems of the Islamic and communist rebellions have not gone away, though for the most part, they have been contained. These recent decades, unfortunately, have not seen peace come to the Philippines. The Nation has not only been plagued by insurgent irregular warfare, but also by a number of internal military coups. These irregular military operations, which include the Peoples Power Revolution EDSA, EDSAIII, the Oakwood Mutiny, and other coups, show panache for irregular warfare, even among the Philippine military elite.⁴¹ By 2001, one of the largest growing problems within the Philippines was the influence, harboring, and alliance of Moro Islamic

³⁹ Richard J. Kessler, *Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 1–27.

⁴⁰ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 485–646.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 604.

insurgents with trans-national terrorist organizations. These organizations have increased the capacity and the capabilities of Filipinos to conduct terrorism against their own Nation, so far as to gain the attention of the United States. At the time of this study, the U.S. military has maintained an almost constant special operations presence in the Southern Philippines since 2001.⁴² Operation Enduring Freedom Philippines, a lesser known front in the U.S. Global War on Terror, is aimed at assisting the AFP in combating these transnational threats, while simultaneously supporting the growth of the AFP's capacity and capability to counter insurgency.⁴³ All sides in this quiet war (the U.S., the AFP, trans-national terrorist organizations, and the national Moro Islamic insurgents) have readily accepted and used irregular warfare against each other.⁴⁴ All are in the business of using small units and guerrilla tactics, with special operations being the dominant form for government forces, and terrorism a first option for anti-government forces.⁴⁵

When we take these six eras of warfare and compare them with the characteristics of irregular warfare, it is clear that irregular warfare appears in all six periods. The key characteristics of irregular warfare are present in each period: small, under-resourced units using any tactics they can to survive, to attrite the enemy, and to continue the battle until they are able to win their political state.

⁴² 1st Special Forces Group, "The History of the 1st SF Group in the Republic of the Philippines: 1957–2002," *Special Warfare Magazine* (June 2002), 14–15.

⁴³ Greg Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation: OEF Philippines and the Indirect Approach," *Military Review* (Nov-Dec 2006), 4.

⁴⁴ David P. Fridovich and Fred T. Krawchuk, "The Special Operations Forces Indirect Approach," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 44 (1st Quarter 2007)

⁴⁵ Brian Petit, "OEF-Philippines: Thinking COIN, Practicing FID," *Special Warfare Magazine*, vol. 23, iss. 1 (January-February 2010), 10–15.

ERA	Pre-Colonial	Spanish Colonial	American Colonial	Japanese Occupation	Post-Independence		GWOT	
Force	Filipino	Filipino Revolutionaries	Filipino Revolutionaries	Fil-Am Guerrillas	Anti GRP	AFP	Anti GRP	AFP
Small Units	X	X	X	X	X	HYBRID	X	HYBRID
Under Resourced	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Irregular Tactics	X	X	X	X	X	HYBRID	X	X
Terrorism					X		X	
Leverage existing Technology	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Protracted Conflict	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Attrition Objectives	X	X	X	X	X		X	X

Figure 2. Irregular warfare characteristics through Filipino warfare eras

In Figure 2, we have separated terrorism from the other tactics or doctrines. This is because we feel that the use of terrorism needs its own separate identification, due to the political sensitivity of its use, and because of the high degree of contemporary focus and study of the tactic. Furthermore, because terrorism is specifically broken out by Dr. Arquilla as one of the three legs of his irregular warfare triad from other tactics, we felt it was important to differentiate in this study. This is that terrorism is distinctly different from the other tactics of guerrilla warfare, insurgency, or special operations. For this study, terrorism will be defined according to the U.S. joint definition provided in the Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept 2.0. “Terrorism is the calculated use or threat of unlawful political violence against noncombatants, intended to coerce or intimidate

governments or societies through fear.”⁴⁶ Throughout the study we will keep terrorism separate from other tactics in order to keep track of when it becomes a prevalent aspect of the Filipino way of war.

Figure 2 is a generalization of six distinct and detailed eras of conflict. However, the detailed narrative in each era better supports the ability to return to these fundamental characteristics of irregular warfare during the analysis of in the subsequent chapters of this study.

When taken together, both will present a concrete conclusion that, in each of these conflicts, Filipinos have consistently competed for their interests to the best of their abilities. That the ends, ways, and means of the multitude of Filipino military organizations has resulted in generations of leaders, deciding to use irregular warfare strategies to achieve their political objectives.⁴⁷

With a deep and history of action to analyze, the idea that irregular warfare is the *Filipino Way of War* will be shown. Small units, guerrilla tactics, special operations, terrorism, hybrid irregular/conventional campaigns, and the simultaneous use by military and insurgent organizations, will make it clear that the Filipino is at home with irregular warfare. Important to this study is to understand why we should analyze this. The conclusion will present ideas and recommendations for how the AFP should proceed forward in the next fifty years. With all of their hard fought lessons learned and a ingrained flair for the irregular, the AFP has settled with a more holistic strategy using irregular, conventional, and complete government resources to meet national threats. As external military influence on and in the Philippines wanes in this century, it is important to understand and prepare the AFP for the future. By understanding past actions, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of their strategy, the Philippine military can be better prepared for tomorrow.

⁴⁶ Joint Staff, ““Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats, Joint Operating Concept 2.0,” B-8.

⁴⁷ H. Richard Yarger, “Towards A Theory of Strategy: Art Lykke and the Army War College Strategy Model,” in *Theory of War and Strategy*, Volume I, ed. James A. Helis (Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College, 2005), Ch. 3.

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II. PRE-COLONIAL FILIPINO WARFARE

“And they followed us, hurling poisoned arrows four or six times; while, recognizing the captain, they turned toward him inasmuch as twice they hurled arrows very close to his head. But as a good captain and a knight he still stood fast with some others, fighting thus for more than an hour. And he refused to retire further, an Indian threw a bamboo lance in his face, and the captain immediately killed him with his lance, leaving it in his body. Then, trying to lay hand on his sword, he could draw it out but halfway, because of a wound from a bamboo lance that he had in his arm. Which seeing, all those people threw themselves on him, and one of them with a large terciado, which is like a large scimitar, thrust it into his left leg, whereby he fell face downward. On this all at once rushed upon him with lances of iron and of bamboo and with scimitars, so that they slew our mirror, our light, our comfort, and our true guide.”

–Antonio Pigafetta, on his personal account of the death of Ferdinand Magellan at the hands of Mactan Datu Lapu Lapu⁴⁸

A. INTRODUCTION

The deep traditions of irregular warfare in the Philippines were set long before Western colonial powers began to arrive in the islands. The tribal society that dominated Philippine culture prior to the arrival of the colonials, also contributed directly to the dominance of irregular warfare. The Barangay (village) was the dominant form of sociopolitical organization, as well as the main organization in warfare. Males from allied families within the barangay conducted battle led by their chief, often against their neighbors. The battles were bloody, savage, brutal, and close. Goals were the accumulation of wealth, women, glory, or vengeance.⁴⁹ This truly was an age of irregular warfare for the Filipino warrior. The most common fighting seen was by small units from the barangay conducting raids against other barangays, using the hand weapons that they had available. Occasionally larger battles would take place, but often the only factor to change was the amount of warriors participating. The genetic DNA of irregular warfare

⁴⁸Antonio Pigafetta, *Magellan's Voyage: A Narrative Account of the First Circumnavigation*, Volume I, translated and edited by R.A. Skelton from the manuscript in Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), 87–88.

⁴⁹Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 2–5.

inside the Filipino warrior was being solidified at this very early age, setting the path that the Filipino warrior would follow for centuries.

B. ENVIRONMENT / SITUATION

To this day, there continues to be much debate about the manner and method of the development of the Filipino people and Filipino society. Generally, the debate revolves around where the first Filipinos arrived from, the manner of their arrival, and the extent of their spreading throughout the islands. What is known is that evidence of human existence on the islands can be traced through archeology as far back as 22,000 years ago.⁵⁰ This time covers four large periods of development for the Filipino people. Pieced together through archeology using rare and incomplete historical stories, the Anthropologist F. Landa Jocano breaks these periods into the Formative Phase, the Incipient Phase, the Emergent Phase, and the Baranganic Phase.⁵¹

The Formative Phase is exactly as titled, the period where the formation of a Filipino people and societal structure began. This was a very basic stone tool era.⁵² The Incipient Phase was characterized by a “general leveling off of local and regional socio-cultural differences and the breakdown of isolation.”⁵³ This phase was distinctive as a period where isolated groups began to interact, as well as by the appearance of metals and metalworking.⁵⁴ The Emergent Phase was the period where a definable social organization appeared. This included patterns of politics, economics, religion, and social cultural practices. Intensive trading, both internal and external, was important to this phase of Filipino prehistory.⁵⁵ This trading was important because it brought with it ideas

⁵⁰ Teodoro A. Agoncillo and Oscar M. Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, rev ed (Quezon City: Malaya Books, 1967), 21.

⁵¹ F. Landa Jocano, *Filipino Prehistory: Rediscovering Precolonial Heritage* (Quezon City, Philippines: Punlad Research House, 1998).

⁵² Ibid., 107–108.

⁵³ Ibid., 119.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 120–122.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 135–137.

and inventions from other peoples, as well as the inevitable cross populating of cultures and peoples. Notably, trading was most common with people from India, China, Malay, and Arabia.

The Final phase was the Baranganic Phase. Defined as the phase of the barangay or village, this phase ran from circa 14 through 16 centuries AD.⁵⁶ This phase is the most important to this study because it was the period where society reached a point that warfare began to emerge. The irregular warfare trends developed in these centuries had a lasting impact on how warfare was conducted in future centuries.

C. ORGANIZATION

The organizational structure of warfare in the Baranganic Phase was the barangay. The barangay (or village) was the smallest sociopolitical unit in Filipino culture. These barangays were usually small, consisting of from 10 to 100 households. The larger (and more rare) barangays could be from 2000 to up to 20,000 households. The barangay was an independent, self-sustaining, politically organized community, controlled by a ruling Datu (chieftain) and a council of elders.⁵⁷

The purpose of the barangay was socially oriented. By joining together, the families within the barangay were able to share and work towards common goals, including but not limited to, defense of the home and land, economic trading, farming, and rule of law. One of the main purposes for the organization of the barangay was defense of the home and family from attack by other barangays. Barangay battles were common, but “since resources were plentiful and populations small,”⁵⁸ territory was not generally a cause for battles.

The reasons for battle included: control over the population, to avenge wrongdoing,⁵⁹ broken trade promises, theft, murder,⁶⁰ abuse of friendship, or general

⁵⁶ Jocano, *Filipino Prehistory: Rediscovering Precolonial Heritage*, 153.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 154–155.

⁵⁸ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 2.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Jocano, *Filipino Prehistory: Rediscovering Precolonial Heritage*, 162.

feuding.⁶¹ Because battle could come at any time, it was necessary for each barangay to keep a standing force. This force was comprised of all the able-bodied males within the barangay.⁶²

The barangay force was personally led by their Datus, to whom the men developed and owed fierce loyalty.⁶³ This responsibility was one of the most important tasks for the Datu. His leadership was only bestowed through heredity, skill in battle, or the accumulation of wealth and marriages, the latter of which could both be achieved through battle. Jocano describes the most important aspect of datuship as personal charisma and the ability to lead a community through hard times and prosper, to lead by example, and to lead from the front.⁶⁴

In order to strengthen their organizations, barangays would ally themselves with others for mutual benefit. However, this barangay alliance could also be forced by larger barangays upon smaller units.⁶⁵ In April 1521, Ferdinand Magellan lost a battle (and his head) fighting against a barangay force led by the Mactan Chieftain Lapulapu.⁶⁶ This battle is a fine example of the rapid organization of barangays for battle; “overnight, Lapulapu was able to mobilize hundreds of warriors to engage and defeat the Spaniards at dawn.”⁶⁷ Though this is an example of an alliance for a larger operation, the majority of battles throughout the barangay era consisted of small barangays versus other small barangays.

D. TACTICS / DOCTRINE

The majority of inter-barangay warfare consisted of raiding neighboring barangays. This was an era of raiding and defending. The villages would wait until surprise was on their side, then strike swiftly with purpose in order to achieve their goal –

⁶¹ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 41.

⁶² Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 2.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Jocano, *Filipino Prehistory: Rediscovering Precolonial Heritage*, 159.

⁶⁵ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 2.

⁶⁶ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 72.

⁶⁷ Jocano, *Filipino Prehistory: Rediscovering Precolonial Heritage*, 155.

for example, to steal women, food, or weapons. Any raid would cause a reactionary attack; otherwise, the implication was that the barangay was weak, which would only invite more attacks.⁶⁸

Raids were carried out on land and at sea. Raids on land would be directed against enemy barangays, raids at sea against enemy ships. Because of the geographic features of the Philippines—over 7000 islands and massive coastlines—raiding parties would often travel in boats, land to conduct their attack, and then retreat via boat back to their own barangay. Because of the frequent maritime aspect, raiding was often seasonal, depending on tides, winds, weather, and harvests.⁶⁹

Another common offensive tactic was the ambush—by setting themselves in an area where it was known that an enemy would be traveling through, and then bushwhacking them. The third (and most obvious) common aspect to the doctrine of the era was defense. Simple fortifications were built to help protect the physical barangay, accompanied by the strategic placement of structures to take advantage of terrain to help in the defense.⁷⁰ Outside of method of attack, actual battles were hand-to-hand combat; often taking place no farther than a spear could be thrown, but generally face to face since most warriors carried hand weapons.

E. WEAPONS / TECHNOLOGY

Filipino weapons of the Baranganic Phase were mostly handheld edged weapons—daggers, swords, knives, and spears being the most common. Other weapons—such as blowguns, bow and arrow, crossbows, and the stone and sling—were still used, but less frequently.⁷¹ As a comparison, both before and during the Baranganic Phase (14 through 16 centuries AD), outside of the Philippines, weapons which used

⁶⁸ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 2.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 2–3.

⁷¹ Ibid., 3.

gunpowder (such as cannon, muskets, and pistols) were already in use around the world. Large sailing ships and conventional land armies were routinely outfitted with such weapons.

Handheld edged weapons were so common to the culture that for a male to appear in public without one was considered a sign of disgrace, and would imply that he was a slave.⁷² The most common blade weapons were the *kris*, a short sword used to slash. Often, the Filipino warrior would begin his attack by slashing at his enemy's arm, hoping to disarm them by wounding the same hand they would wield their weapon.⁷³ Also popular was the *kampilan*, a larger sword, that when delivered with a two handed stroke could cleave skull and bone. Finally, the Filipino would often be armed with a barong, a short leaf-shaped heavy blade, which could be concealed, yet could easily deliver a decapitating blow.⁷⁴

Apart from weapons, Filipino warriors of the pre-colonial age would commonly be equipped with some personal protective equipment. Items such as heavy shields made of hard woods, and lighter shields made of lighter wood (using materials available locally), were used to protect from sword and spear blows. The warriors were sometimes also equipped with breastplates and helmets made from whatever was available. Quilted body armor similar to chain mail was created by weaving bamboo and carabao hide and horn.

The most important aspect of the weapons of the era was that the Filipinos generally made good use of what they had available to them. Massive resources were not put into the development of better and better weapons. Instead, the Filipino warriors accepted their limited means and tried to leverage an advantage from the already existing technology.

⁷² James R. Arnold, *The Moro War: How America Battled a Muslim Insurgency in the Philippine Jungle, 1902–1913* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Press, 2011), 46.

⁷³ Ibid., 46–47.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 47.

F. ANALYSIS / CONCLUSION

PRE-COLONIAL FILIPINO WARFARE	
Force	Filipino Barangay Tribal Forces
Small Units	X
Comparatively Under Resourced	X
Irregular Tactics / Doctrine	X
Terrorism	
Leveraging existing Technology	X
Protracted Conflict	
Attrition Objectives	

Figure 3. Pre-colonial Filipino irregular warfare characteristics

Present in the pre-colonial era were key aspects of irregular warfare. The barangay tribal forces generally fought in small units, raiding and ambushing each other. Occasionally they would create alliances in order to mass strength, but these would be fleeting and rare. These warriors used what technology was on hand and available at the time: handheld edged weapons and primitive projectile weapons. Compared to western militaries of the age, these were severely under-resourced fighting forces. However, when compared internally to each other, they were relatively evenly matched. The objectives of conflicts were far ranging, but due to the limited resources, battles were often quick. The types of military objectives were different, maintaining a more primitive purpose. Certainly, attrition and annihilation were both seen in the era, as well as long protracted battles and quick decisive engagements between barangays and families. The most important aspect of this analysis, and relevance to this thesis, is that the tribal pre-colonial era set the tone for future conflict in the Philippines.

Based upon the organization (small units formed from families, which are not a regular paid force but an irregular force formed from within the community), the pre-colonial Filipino warrior fits well within Dr. Arquilla's definition of irregular warfare: under-resourced forces, using small units and guerrilla tactics. Coupling this organization with the common tactics of the day, raiding and ambushing, we see that the Filipino was conducting his warfare using guerrilla tactics. Modern terrorism of civilian populations was not specifically mentioned in Filipino pre-history writings, but it can be assumed that the nature of tribal conflict, which would include the entire family, would spread fear amongst the communities. The Pre-colonial Filipino was not a pre-trained, professional fighting force, but an irregular unit, using tactics, which came naturally and with little training. Sneaking up to gain relative superiority,⁷⁵ and then striking quickly and violently, so as not to allow their enemy the ability to mount a defense. The weapons used were not overly developed or resourced. The Filipino warrior used what was available to him, trying to gain advantage by leveraging existing technology. The barangays and Datus did not have massive amounts of resources or wealth to dedicate to weapons development or manufacturing, so they made do with what was available, or with what could be gained through raids and battles. There can be no doubt, when looking at Filipino history as a whole, that the great tradition of irregular warfare began simultaneously with the formation and development of the people, society, and nation state.

⁷⁵ William H. McRaven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), 4–11.

III. SPANISH COLONIAL ERA WARFARE

A. INTRODUCTION

Ferdinand Magellan discovered the Philippines on 17 March 1521, when he saw a group of islands off the coast of Samar.⁷⁶ Magellan's discovery brought to Spain's awareness the existence of the archipelago later named the Philippines, in honor of King Philip II of Spain. However, it was not until 27 April 1565 that the Spanish colonization period began under the expedition of Miguel Lopez de Legaspi.⁷⁷ What followed was a very long period of Spanish rule for most of the islands and their inhabitants. Spanning more than three centuries, Spanish rule over the islands brought profound influences—political, economic, social, cultural, and religious—in the lives of the people. The most notable of these influences was the introduction of Christianity.⁷⁸ Further, the establishment of Spanish rule opened the Philippines to the western world.⁷⁹ But while these influences may have brought some positive effects, the Filipinos were likewise subjected to the more negative and lamentable aspects of Spanish rule.⁸⁰ The Filipino response to these negative aspects of Spanish rule finally found its expression with the Filipino revolt in the latter part of the 19 century. The Philippine revolution of 1896 marked the beginning of Filipino solidarity, and of fighting foreign invaders under the concept of nationalism. Along with the revolution came the emergence of the Philippine military, certainly in its infancy stage.

Fighting during the pre-colonial period was between tribes. Loyalty was mainly to family and tribes, and the motivations were limited to tribal interests. The succeeding period, however, saw a shift from being tribal to more nationalistic in character. The period saw the coming together of the locals to fight against the colonizers. Ultimately,

⁷⁶ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 79–80.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 83–84.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 113–114.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 96, 123.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 123.

the Spanish colonial period gave birth to the Philippine military, a fruition of national aspirations to achieve the quest for independence.

This chapter presents the evolution of the Philippine military. It tells the story of how a revolutionary group, grossly lacking in resources, rose to fight a powerful enemy, armed only with their warrior tradition and their nationalistic fervor. The ensuing revolution, likewise, saw how the weak could overcome their inferiority to progressively turn the table against the strong. Starting from scratch, the revolutionaries kept their organizing activities underground in order to grow. As they achieved a certain level of growth, the revolutionaries tried to tow the conventional path, by fighting the Spanish forces toe-to-toe with large formations. While it was inevitable to organize in a more conventional fashion, so as to achieve direction and centralization of their efforts, the revolutionaries found out that such an option was a disadvantage against a much more organized, trained, and equipped adversary. To offset their inherent disadvantage, the revolutionary forces had to adapt to an indirect method of fighting their enemy—that of guerrilla warfare.

The first part of this chapter provides the general situation of the Philippines during the period—what characterized the Spanish rule, what were the prevailing sentiments of the people, and what finally led the people to revolt. The second part deals with the historical aspects, touching on the significant events of the Philippine revolution. It discusses the growth of the Philippine military in terms of organization, the tactics/doctrine employed, and the technology used to wage revolution. The last part of this chapter provides an analysis of what constituted the Filipino way of war during the period—determining that it was essentially irregular in nature. Throughout the period of the revolution, the Filipino way of fighting would be characterized by a dominance of guerrilla tactics to offset the inherent disadvantages in organization, weapons, and military training. Small units would take the place of large unit formations. The Spanish colonial period exemplified two of Arquilla's fundamental characteristics of irregular warfare—the preference of small units, and inherently, the use of guerrilla tactics.

B. ENVIRONMENT / SITUATION

Right from the beginning, and throughout its period of rule, Spain encountered resistance from the Filipinos. The first of these series of resistances against the Spaniards were when Lapu-Lapu refused to pledge his allegiance to the King of Spain.⁸¹ The defiant Lapu-Lapu, despite having inferior weapons compared to the Spaniards, fiercely fought Magellan on Mactan Island on 27 March 1521. This resulted in the death of Magellan and the retreat of his companions. This was followed by other revolts: the revolt of Lakandula and Sulayman (1574); Tamblot's revolt in Bohol (1622); Bankaw's revolt in Leyte (1622); the Caraga revolt (1630); the Cagayan insurrection (1639); Sumuroy's revolt in the Visayan (1649–1650); Malong's rebellion in Pangasinan (1660); Diego Silang's revolt in Ilocos (1762–1763); and Dagohoy's rebellion in Bohol (1774).⁸² These revolts were caused by one, or a combination of, the following: personal grievances, opposition to some practices or aspects of Spanish rule, religious motives, and agrarian complaints.⁸³ But none of these revolts sought the independence of the Philippines from Spain.

Developments at the turn of the 19th century combined to slowly bring about a sense of nationalism among the Filipinos. One such development was the opening of the Philippines to the Western world. Along with the exchange of commerce and trade came the exposure of the Filipinos to the political developments in Europe and to liberal ideas.⁸⁴ As trade flourished, this brought prosperity to some Filipinos which, in turn, brought about the emergence of a new social class—the *middle class*.⁸⁵ The wealth allowed the middle class families to send their children to good schools, not only in Manila but also to Spain and other European countries, thus further exposing these educated individuals to liberal ideas and current events in Europe. Then, there was the

⁸¹ Carlos Quirino, *Filipinos at War* (Manila: Vera-Reyes, Inc., 1981), 14.

⁸² Uldarico S. Baclagon, *Military History of the Philippines* (Manila: Saint Mary's Pub., 1975), 4–15.

⁸³ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 123.

⁸⁴ Renato Constantino and Letizia R. Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (Quezon City: Tala Pub. Services, 1975), 133.

⁸⁵ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 134.

racial prejudice that Filipinos experienced under the Spanish rule, where Filipinos were looked down upon and discriminated against as a people.⁸⁶ Another issue that came about was the secularization question.⁸⁷ As Filipino priests (who belonged to the seculars) increased in numbers, the Spaniards (the regulars) limited their chances to become parish priests. The Spaniards even despoiled them of parishes already in the possession of Filipino priests. It was regarded by the Filipino priests as an expression of racial prejudice when the Spaniards refused to give them opportunities for the simple reason that they were Filipinos and not Spaniards. Another factor that contributed to the emergence of Filipino nationalism was the enlightened tenure of Carlos Maria de la Torre as governor-general from 1869–1871,⁸⁸ who exercised liberalism during his tenure. He encouraged the freedom of speech, abolished the censorship of the press, and most importantly, dealt with the Filipinos as a people who had the same rights to dignity and self-respect and recognition as the Spaniards. It was during his administration that Filipinos experienced how it was to be treated equally. Finally, there was the event of 1872, the unjust execution of three Filipino priests—Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos and Jacinto Zamora—which was a turning point in Philippine history, for it ushered in the era of the *reform movement*.⁸⁹

All these factors, combined with the common grievances against the Spaniards, aroused the Filipinos' sense of nationalism. Initially, the Filipinos, particularly the middle class, campaigned for reforms in the Spanish administration of the Philippines. It was in the best interest of the middle class, composed of the rich and the intellectuals, to campaign for reforms through peaceful means, for an armed struggle would surely affect their material possessions and their social status.⁹⁰ However, their war of propaganda against the Spanish authorities and friars failed to achieve its purpose for reforms.⁹¹ This

⁸⁶ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 136–137.

⁸⁷ Constantino and Constantino, *The Philippines : A Past Revisited*, 145–146.

⁸⁸ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 142–143.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 150.

failure of the reform movement, highlighted by the arrest and banishment of Jose Rizal to Dapitan in 1892, opened the way for the Filipinos' quest to be liberated from the tyranny of the Spaniards through armed struggle.

C. ORGANIZATION

In terms of organization, the revolutionaries started off from scratch and slowly grew and evolved into a more organized, formalized group. From a conglomeration of small groups emanating from various towns and provinces in the archipelago, the Filipinos saw the need to organize to provide direction and unity for the armed struggle. This need to formally organize tended to tow the conventional path, and reflected later as well on how the revolutionaries fought from an organizational standpoint. Initially, revolutionary forces would fight from large formations and face-to-face with the enemy. However, this would prove ineffective against better-trained and well-equipped Spanish forces. The period of revolution would see the shift from large to small formations to be able to fight guerrilla-type of warfare. As the fight progressed towards the end of the revolution, the revolutionary forces would shift back to the conventional form, dictated by the need to be recognized as a sovereign nation with a professional standing army. However, this proclivity to go conventional would not last long with the advent of the second revolution against the American colonial forces.

In order to pursue its quest for freedom and independence from Spanish rule, the Filipinos needed to organize themselves for action. Andres Bonifacio, with a few others, founded the secret organization *Kataas-taasan Kagalangalang na Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan (KKK or Katipunan)* on 7 July 1892.⁹² It was founded on a radical platform—to secure the independence and freedom of the Philippines by force of arms.⁹³ The secret society served as the nucleus in organizing the manpower and in mobilizing the resources necessary for the armed struggle. The Katipunan initially used the triangle method to recruit its members, for obvious security reasons.⁹⁴ However, failing to

⁹² Gregorio F. Zaide, *The Philippine Revolution* (Manila; Detroit, Mich.: Modern Book Co.; Distributed by The Cellar Book Shop, 1954), 78–79.

⁹³ Ibid., 79.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 85.

generate the much needed number of members, this method of recruitment was changed to a more open system—where any member could take in as many recruits as he could get.⁹⁵ The ability to remain in secrecy, a critical consideration for an organization still in its very infant stage, was put at risk in favor of increasing the organization's numbers. This proved to be of a disadvantage later when the Katipunan's existence was discovered by the Spanish authorities on 19 August 1896, and forced Bonifacio and his men to untimely declare the revolution against the Spaniards in the "Cry of Pugadlawin" on 26 August 1896.⁹⁶

During its organization phase, from 1892 to just before the outbreak of the revolution in 1896, Bonifacio structured the Katipunan into a Supreme Council, the Provincial Council, and the Popular Council.⁹⁷ It showed a government-like structure, with the Supreme Council as the highest governing body, providing the overall direction, and the Provincial and Popular Councils taking charge of the different provinces and towns. Bonifacio also enlisted the support of the women—wives, sisters, or daughters of Katipuneros—by organizing a women's chapter of the Katipunan. The Katipunan, though exhibiting a conventional structure necessary for organizational purposes, remained clandestine.

When the revolution broke out, there was much to be desired in the Katipunan in terms of its military organization. Troops that formed were basically volunteers from the local areas brought in by the local chiefs, while others were tenants that were brought along by landlords.⁹⁸ Commissioned and non-commissioned officers were determined by virtue of their status in the society.⁹⁹ In other words, the officers and men were plain civilians who had chosen to participate in the revolution, but with no military training at all. Compounding the plight of the revolutionaries was the absence of a command and control that would coordinate the operations and other activities and bring them to bear

⁹⁵ Zaide, *The Philippine Revolution*, 85.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 83–84.

⁹⁸ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 24.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

upon the Spaniards and achieve favorable results.¹⁰⁰ With no chain of command to speak of, loyalties bore down to personalities and factions emerged, to the detriment of the cause. There emerged the Magdalo faction, which was of the view that another organization should supersede the Katipunan since it had ceased to be a secret organization, and because they felt it needed to be more responsive to the demands of the period. Then there was the Magdiwang faction—contending that the Katipunan, already with a constitution and by-laws recognized by all, should remain as the government of the revolution.¹⁰¹

To solve the organizational issues, Emilio Aguinaldo proposed the establishment of a republican government and a regular army. The regular army was to be composed of three corps of 10,000 men each, commanded by three generals and a general-in-chief.¹⁰² Thus, on 22 March, 1897, Bonifacio and members of the Magdalo and Magdiwang factions met at the so-called Tejeros Convention.¹⁰³ This resulted in the dissolution of the Katipunan and the establishment of a government called “Republica Filipina.” Also established was the Filipino Army, composed of the various loose units of revolutionaries, and with Artemio Ricarte elected as the captain general.¹⁰⁴ Unfortunate as it was, the Tejeros Convention marked the irreconcilable differences between Bonifacio and Aguinaldo, eventually leading to the execution of the former. Nonetheless, the revolutionaries now became more unified under one command, and the struggle continued with Aguinaldo assuming the leadership of the revolution.

As the revolutionaries became more organized, fighting against the Spaniards resumed on all fronts. The Spanish authorities, who still had the advantage in terms of weapons and organization, began to feel the impact of the Filipinos’ struggle.¹⁰⁵ It wore down the Spanish government, drained its resources and weakened the morale of its

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 212–213.

¹⁰² Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 26.

¹⁰³ Zaide, *The Philippine Revolution*, 142–143.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 146.

¹⁰⁵ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 29.

troops. Thus, the Spaniards offered a truce with the Filipinos.¹⁰⁶ The truce stipulated that Aguinaldo and his ranking officers would go into exile, and the Filipino Army would be disbanded and weapons turned in.¹⁰⁷ In exchange, the Spaniards would pay Php 800,000, plus an additional Php 1,700,000 for the victims of the war, make a declaration of amnesty, and support an end to the hostilities and a promise for reforms to improve the conditions of the Filipinos.¹⁰⁸ Before the end of 1897, Aguinaldo eventually agreed to a truce and went in exile to Hongkong.¹⁰⁹ The truce, however, did not hold its ground as the Spaniards did not keep their part of the bargain. The revolutionaries that were left behind, and had remained skeptical about the truce, opted not to surrender their firearms and used the time to reorganize. For Aguinaldo and his companions in exile, they continued to reorganize and purchase weapons and ammunition. Despite the truce, the revolution did not actually stop and still continued in some parts of the archipelago.

In April 1898, the Spanish-American War broke out, which later resulted in the defeat of the Spanish fleet by Admiral Dewey's fleet in the Battle of Manila Bay.¹¹⁰ The turn of events brought new hope to Aguinaldo and his forces. Aguinaldo, with help from the Americans, returned to the Philippines from exile.¹¹¹ Aguinaldo saw this as an opportunity to continue and finally finish the revolution against the Spaniards. Upon return from exile, Aguinaldo rallied the Filipino revolutionary forces to fight for independence from Spanish rule. As fighting broke out in almost all parts of the archipelago, the Filipinos scored victory after victory. Manila was soon surrounded by the revolutionary forces and most of Luzon was freed from Spanish control. As the historian Pobre would describe it, the battles between the Filipinos and the Spaniards would finally be over, for all practical purposes, by mid-1898.¹¹² Hence, on 12 June, of the same year, Aguinaldo declared Philippine independence.

¹⁰⁶ Zaide, *The Philippine Revolution*, 159.

¹⁰⁷ Zaide, *The Philippine Revolution*, 162.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 162–163.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 169.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 180.

¹¹² Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 32.

After the declaration of independence, Aguinaldo immediately took steps to transform the revolutionary forces into a more systematically organized army. A decree was issued setting down organizational rules for the Army, considered to be the first law specifically organizing a standing army for the Philippines.¹¹³ Modeled after armies of the time, the Philippine Army was to have the standard military arms and branches: infantry, artillery, cavalry, engineers, and a general staff. These were to be supported by a Quartermaster Division, a Medical Corps, and a Judge Advocate Division. The basic organization of forces was to be regional, headed by the provincial military commander.¹¹⁴ Units were of battalion size, composed of six companies each, with each company having three officers and 100 enlisted men.¹¹⁵ In support of the standing army were two irregular forces, the territorial militia and the *sandatahans* (bolo-armed forces); the only difference between the two was that the former was more organized.¹¹⁶ Aguinaldo placed Gen. Antonio Luna, the best qualified military officer at that time, in charge of bringing the Philippine Army to a standard. Luna, making use of his military knowledge obtained from Europe, implemented organizational systems addressing, among other things, the Army's appointment and promotion of officers, pay and allowances, and rules and regulations to discipline the troops.¹¹⁷ At about the same time, the Philippine Navy was organized, with a steamboat becoming the first vessel of the Navy, followed by merchant marine vessels owned by Filipinos who joined the Filipino land forces in the fight against the Spaniards.¹¹⁸ Most of these vessels operated in the Visayas for the inter-island transport of weapons and supplies for the revolutionaries.

Meantime, Luna recognized the importance of further developing and professionalizing the Army and recommended the creation of a military academy. Thus, Aguinaldo decreed the establishment of the Academia Militar on 25 October 1898, in

¹¹³ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 32.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 32–33.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 34.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 35.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 36–37.

Malolos, Bulacan.¹¹⁹ The academy aimed to address the professional education and training of the officer corps that would lead the Army in the future. However, the Academia Militar was deactivated in the early part of 1899 because of the impending hostilities with the Americans.

Toward the end of the 19th century, it was evident that the Filipinos were already beginning to transform their revolutionary forces from loosely-knit, decentralized and rag-tag guerrilla units to a more conventional, standardized army. This was a necessary transformation for the Aguinaldo forces to move from being insurgents to being in power. But the Filipinos' independence and the development of their forces into a conventional standing army would be put on hold. Unbeknownst to the Filipinos, the Americans had a different plan for the Philippines. The Americans, secretly negotiating with Spain, assumed sovereignty over the Philippine territory, concluded with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 10 December 1898.¹²⁰ This ushered in a new era for the Filipinos and their forces with the eventual outbreak of the Philippine-American War on 5 February 1899, immediately following the revolution against the Spanish colonial forces.

D. TACTICS / DOCTRINE

It was in terms of tactics/doctrine that the Filipino revolutionaries capitalized on, and tried to make up for their weaknesses in organization, weapons, and training. Raids and “ambuscades” would become the staple tactics for the Filipinos. This particular period in the revolution against the Spanish forces would provide the earliest accounts of guerrilla tactics employed against a more organized, much more powerful foreign enemy. Building on their familiarity with the terrain and their ability to easily blend with the population, the Filipino revolutionaries were able to exploit these advantages to inflict harm on the enemy.

The discovery of the Katipunan by the Spanish authorities happened at a time when the underground organization was not yet fully prepared to readily engage the Spanish forces. Faced with mass arrests, the Filipinos were forced to launch their

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 38.

¹²⁰ Zaide, *The Philippine Revolution*, 289.

revolution. As expected, the initial clashes with the Spaniards resulted in defeat for the Katipuneros. The Filipinos were very much at a disadvantage against the trained and well-equipped Spanish forces. The Filipinos had no other option but to fight a guerrilla type of warfare—engaging the enemy only when they had the battlefield advantage, while retreating into the shadows or evading a fight when the odds were against them. The Filipinos made use of raids and ambushes, choosing when and where to fight the Spaniards, making good use of their knowledge of the terrain. Raids brought success to the revolutionaries on a number of occasions; the most notable was the one led by Gregorio del Pilar in Paombong on 31 August 1897.¹²¹ Other successful raids were those conducted against Spanish garrisons in: San Rafael, Bulacan; Atimonan, Tayabas (now Quezon); Aliaga, Nueva Ecija; and in various points in Laguna, Batangas, Pangasinan, Tarlac, and Zambales.¹²² Moreover, the revolutionaries had the support of the Filipino population who aided them in terms of logistics, provided the necessary intelligence, or simply provided refuge. Aptly described by Pobre, the revolutionaries were the “fish” that greatly depended on the population, the “sea,” for their strength and survival.¹²³

To address the shortage of weapons, the employment of Filipino forces would have those without arms, the volunteers, closely following those with arms, the active.¹²⁴ When somebody from the active forces got hit or downed, those without arms would readily pick up the weapon and continue the fight. Further, the volunteers were also assigned the task of collecting any reusable weapons or materials found in the battle scenes that could still be of use for the next battle.

As the revolutionary fervor spread in other areas of the archipelago, fighting likewise erupted in those areas. Filipino guerrilla forces were present, not only within Manila and its surrounding provinces, but also in Central Luzon, Southern Luzon, the Bicol provinces and the Visayan provinces.¹²⁵ This served the revolutionary forces well, as the Spaniards found themselves threatened from various fronts. Fighting from all

¹²¹ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 28–29.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 29.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

fronts wore down the colonial forces, drained their resources, and sapped the morale of their troops. The nature of warfare used by the Filipinos forced the Spanish authorities to offer a truce, for fear of losing more lives and property.

E. WEAPONS / TECHNOLOGY

Weapons were one area where the Filipinos were very much at a disadvantage. Bereft of the resources or the technology needed to produce modern-day weapons, the Filipinos had to make do with what was available in their meager arsenal. They had to resort to raiding Spanish arsenals to get rifles and pistols—or acquire the weapons during successful engagements against Spanish forces and garrisons. The revolutionaries also resorted to improvisation, particularly for needed ammunition.

Initially, weapons of the Katipunan were mostly bolos, spears, and other bladed weapons.¹²⁶ These were complemented with bows and arrows, clubs, some pistols and old rifles, and *paltik* (home-made gun).¹²⁷ These were of no match to the weapons of the Spaniards, who were armed with Remingtons and Mausers.¹²⁸ Thus, Bonifacio eyed Japan as a source for weapons, particularly the *Murata* rifles used in the recently concluded Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895.¹²⁹ Talks were initiated with the admiral on board the Japanese ship *Kongo*, who dropped anchor at Manila Bay at that time. However, the revolutionaries failed to enlist the support of the Japanese. It dawned on the revolutionaries that the best hope to obtain rifles (and ammunition) were those captured from successful engagement and raids against Spanish troops and garrisons. To this end, Bonifacio enlisted the help of two government employees at the *Maestranza* (arsenal), to steal rifles and pistols for the Katipunan.¹³⁰ This expediency, however, was not enough to arm the revolutionary forces. It was only later in the revolution that the Filipinos were able to substantially increase their arsenal, after Aguinaldo came back from exile in

¹²⁶ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 18.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 204.

¹²⁹ Zaide, *The Philippine Revolution*, 99–101.

¹³⁰ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 204–205.

Hongkong—along with purchased weapons and ammunition from abroad.¹³¹ Any semblance of artillery was generally crude, consisting of lantakas and bamboo “cannons” reinforced with wire and timber shoring.¹³²

While the Filipinos could easily manufacture bolos and other bladed weapons, there was not much technology available to support their needs for weaponry. If there was any ammunition manufactured, it was done by revolutionaries who used to work in the Spanish arsenals. However, such ammunition was not always reliable.

F. ANALYSIS / CONCLUSION

After more than three centuries of Spanish domination, the Filipinos had finally come together to express their grievances and a sense of nationalism through revolution. The revolution saw the birth of the Philippine military. It was a classic case of an insurgent group trying to overthrow a government in power. First, the Filipinos had to organize themselves in order to mobilize the manpower and resources needed to fight the Spaniards. They had to make sure that this whole process of organizing was kept secret, in order to allow the organization to grow to a level where it was capable enough to challenge the authority. Otherwise, their early discovery would essentially nip the revolution in its bud. Second, as the revolution broke out, the Katipuneros had to continuously adapt themselves to the demands of the situation. Tactics had to be adjusted—from being “position soldiers” to “hit and run soldiers”—in order to compensate for the lack of weapons and technology. This was also the case with the shift to smaller units in lieu of large formations. Their revolutionary experience likewise emphasized the merits of having the population on their side, as well as the insurgents’ knowledge of the terrain. Further, it saw the insurgents’ determined objective to gain independence from colonial rule. Hence, there was no doubt that the insurgents’ would fight no matter what and how long it took. On the other hand, the colonial forces were faced with concerns about time, resources, morale of troops, and other external factors that certainly had an effect on the Philippine revolution. Finally, as the revolution wore

¹³¹ Zaide, *The Philippine Revolution*, 179–180.

¹³² Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 26.

on, the Katipuneros had to slowly transform their forces from a rag-tag guerrilla force to a more professional, standing army. Troop discipline, professionalism, systems-thinking, training and education, organizational structure, and other concerns became the order of the day. It was an inevitable transition necessary for the Filipinos if they were to stand as a sovereign nation. They needed to create a capable military organization. Yet, in hindsight, fighting guerrilla-type warfare was something the Filipinos would resort back to during the American colonial period, and beyond.

While much has been described of the Filipino revolutionaries, how the colonial forces dealt with the revolution is worthy of mention. The Spaniards conducted mass arrests of individuals suspected of being, or of collaborating with, the revolutionaries. Areas where revolutions were taking place were placed under martial law. Terror and intimidation became the automatic response of the Spanish authorities. They resorted to the torture of individuals and public executions became a common scene.¹³³ In Cavite, thirteen men were executed on 12 September 1896—they have since been known as “*Los Trece Martires de Cavite*.”¹³⁴ On 4 January 1897, twelve Bicolano rebels were executed, making them the “*Twelve Bicol Martyrs*.”¹³⁵ The most infamous of these executions was that of Jose Rizal, executed by firing squad at the old Bagumbayan Field in Luneta on 30 December 1896.¹³⁶ However, the reign of terror conducted by the Spanish authorities did not curb the revolution. It only served to inflame the feelings of the Filipinos against the Spaniards and made them fight with more determination. The negative aspects of the Spanish colonial period had reached a boiling point, and there was no stopping the Filipino revolution.

¹³³ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 23.

¹³⁴ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 211.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

SPANISH COLONIAL ERA WARFARE	
Force	Filipino Revolutionaries
Small Units	X
Comparatively Under Resourced	X
Irregular Tactics / Doctrine	X
Terrorism	
Leveraging existing Technology	X
Protracted Conflict	X
Attrition Objectives	X

Figure 4. Spanish Colonial Era Filipino irregular warfare characteristics

The Spanish colonial era essentially saw the first accounts of the use of irregular warfare by the Filipinos against an invading force. Figure 4 highlights the irregular warfare characteristics. Initially inclined to battle the Spanish colonial forces using large formations, the Filipinos were forced to shift to small units to counter the overwhelming advantage of the enemy. Accordingly, this led to the use of guerrilla tactics—of raids and ambushes—to hurt and wear down the enemy. As the Filipinos did not have the resources and the technology to their advantage, guerrilla tactics was the means to acquire the needed weapons and further use it against their enemy. The Filipinos had to make do with what was available and supplement it with whatever could be captured from the enemy. Likewise, it was to the advantage of the Filipinos to prolong the conflict, to choose when and where to fight, given the right opportunity, in order to drain the enemy of their resources and wear down the morale of enemy forces. The Filipino revolutionaries were, for the most part, applying Arquilla's fundamentals of irregular warfare. These fundamentals would, time and again, also serve the Filipinos well with the advent of the Philippine-American hostilities.

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IV. AMERICAN COLONIAL ERA WARFARE

A. INTRODUCTION

The Philippine-American War was an excellent example of a Filipino conflict that highlighted the Filipino propensity for irregular warfare. The Filipinos were always under resourced compared to the Americans. This asymmetry forced the Filipinos to innovate their organizations and strategy using irregular methods in order to attain their goals. The Philippine-American hostility was a reaffirmation of Arquilla's irregular warfare characteristics displayed by the weak when fighting the strong. It was a continuation of the way Filipino revolutionaries fought a colonial force. While they were ultimately defeated, the irregular methodology was internalized, and would be repeatedly used throughout the next century.

B. ENVIRONMENT / SITUATION

How the U.S. got involved with the Philippines, and eventually, the war in the Philippine Islands, can be traced to a series of events that happened half-way across the globe before the turn of the 20th century. Around 1897, Spain was already dealing with Cuban insurgents who wanted independence from Spanish rule. Meantime, the U.S., initially contented with just passively supporting the cause of Cuban independence, became more interested in a resolution to the Cuban conflict. When riots erupted in Havana on January 1898, the U.S. made it known to Spain that it was greatly concerned with the safety of American citizens.¹³⁷ Thus, the *USS Maine* was sent to Havana to provide some means to secure the safety of American citizens, arriving on 25 January 1898. On 15 February 1898, an explosion destroyed the *USS Maine*, docked at Havana harbor, and killed 266 American sailors.¹³⁸ A U.S. board of inquiry conducted an investigation that later concluded that a mine was detonated under the *USS Maine*, but

¹³⁷ Michael J. Crawford, Mark L. Hayes and Michael D. Sessions, *The Spanish-American War: Historical Overview and Select Bibliography* (Washington D.C.: Naval Historical Center, Dept. of the Navy, 1998), 7.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

did not come to a conclusion about who was responsible for the disaster.¹³⁹ Nevertheless, the incident created outrage from the American public and a call for intervention in Cuba. The sinking of the *USS Maine*, however, did not lead the Americans to declare war on Spain, but it served as a catalyst towards a diplomatic impasse between the two countries.¹⁴⁰ Following a U.S. naval blockade of Cuba on 21 April, Spain declared war against the U.S. on 25 April.¹⁴¹ Thereafter, the U.S. declared war, paving the way for the outbreak of the war.

Across the Pacific, around the time of the declaration of war, Commodore Dewey's Asiatic Squadron was already in Hong Kong making preparations for war. At 12:15 on 25 April, Dewey received a cable from the U.S. Secretary of Navy Long, that war had commenced between the U.S. and Spain, and to proceed at once to the Philippine Islands, and to commence operations against the Spanish Fleet.¹⁴² Immediately, Dewey's squadron sailed for the Philippines to hunt and destroy the Spanish fleet under Admiral Montojo. On 1 May, Dewey's Asiatic Squadron overwhelmingly destroyed the Spanish fleet at the Battle of Manila Bay.¹⁴³ However, even with the Spanish fleet destroyed, Manila was still under the control of the Spaniards. Dewey simply did not have the forces needed to venture inland. Moreover, the U.S. did not have a clear cut policy on what to do with the Philippines.¹⁴⁴ Dewey had to wait for the arrival of U.S. expeditionary forces before Manila could be taken, and the U.S. could obtain the total surrender of Spanish forces garrisoned in Manila. Whatever the reasons, be it the need to complete the reduction of the Spanish power or the establishment of a colonial government, the U.S. eventually found itself occupying, not only the capital Manila, but most of the archipelago. The eventual American occupation of the Philippines was crucial to the outbreak of the Philippine-American War.

¹³⁹ Crawford et al., *The Spanish-American War: Historical Overview and Select Bibliography*, 7–8.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 8.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 10.

¹⁴² George Dewey, *Autobiography of George Dewey, Admiral of the Navy* (London: Constable, 1913), 195.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 212–224.

¹⁴⁴ Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899–1902* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 3–6.

The outbreak of the Spanish-American War was seen as a blessing for Aguinaldo and his revolutionary forces. Aguinaldo, who was in exile at that time, saw it as an opportunity to continue the struggle for independence and oust the Spaniards.¹⁴⁵ Aguinaldo met with American Consuls Pratt and Wildman prior to his return to the Philippines.

The series of events that transpired from the time Aguinaldo spoke with the American consuls up to his return to Manila is critical—because it explains the tensions and animosity that later developed between the Filipinos and the Americans. Aguinaldo’s account claimed that the tenor of his meetings with Pratt, Wildman, and particularly Dewey was that the U.S. did not desire to colonize the Philippines. The analogy made was that since the U.S. already declared that it would not possess Cuba, it was logical that the U.S. would not be interested in possessing the Philippines—which was thousands of miles away from the U.S. mainland. Aguinaldo’s understanding of the context of the meetings would point to the assumption that the U.S. would then respect the quest for independence of the Filipinos as a nation.¹⁴⁶ However, the American consuls did not agree with this contention about what took place in their meetings. Similarly, citing his own account, Dewey described his dealings with Aguinaldo as being on a more personal note. Although Dewey welcomed the Filipino revolutionaries’ actions against the Spaniards in relation to his purpose of weakening the Spanish position, it was Dewey’s policy to avoid any entangling alliance with Aguinaldo and the revolutionary forces.¹⁴⁷ It must be pointed out that at the time, Filipino forces had already captured (except for Cavite and Manila) most of the areas previously under Spanish control. Regardless of what really transpired in those meetings, this misunderstanding became the source of tensions and animosity between the Filipinos and the Americans. This was further fueled by the exclusion of the Filipino forces in the “mock” Battle of Manila that resulted in the surrender of the Spanish forces and the transfer of Manila to American control.¹⁴⁸ In the

¹⁴⁵ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 119.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 229–231.

¹⁴⁷ Dewey, *Autobiography of George Dewey, Admiral of the Navy*, 245–248.

¹⁴⁸ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 234–236.

minds of the Filipinos, the events surrounding the surrender of the Spanish forces and assuming control of Manila were done with treachery on the part of the Americans. The stage was now set for the imminent outbreak of the Philippine-American War, finally ensuing with the San Juan Bridge incident on the night of 4 February 1898, yet another contentious event from the perspective of both the Filipinos and the Americans.¹⁴⁹

This chapter will now focus on the military actions during the Philippine-American War. Although the American colonial period spanned from 1899 to 1946, albeit briefly interrupted by the Japanese invasion, this chapter is more focused on the early years—for it was during these years that the significant fighting occurred, for both the Filipinos and the Americans. Using Dr. Arquilla's characteristics of irregular warfare, as pointed out earlier, the nature of how the Philippine military fought and evolved during this war will be examined by looking at its organization, tactics/doctrine, and weapons/technology. Equally deserving of attention in this chapter are the counter-actions of the American forces throughout the conflict. The conflict was illustrative of a weaker force fighting a superior force, and thus, of a need for a change in the employment of forces and tactics to counter the marked imbalance. The conflict also highlighted, among other things, these other facets: the brutality used by the opposing forces, the local population becoming an integral part of the conflict, and the use of indigenous forces by the Americans in neutralizing the Filipino forces. By all accounts, the Philippine-American War, on both the Filipino and the American side, was reflective of the nature of irregular warfare.

Just prior to the outbreak of the Philippine-American War, the Filipinos, under the leadership of Aguinaldo, rallied together to fight the Spanish forces. Buoyed by the defeat of the Spaniards at the Battle of Manila Bay, and with Aguinaldo having brought in additional weapons and ammunition, achieving independence was very much within reach for the Filipino revolutionaries. As fighting resumed on all fronts, the Filipinos forces had captured almost all of the areas under Spanish control, leaving Manila as the

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 260–261.

only remaining Spanish stronghold.¹⁵⁰ In other words, Aguinaldo's forces had already surrounded Manila, and brought it under siege.

C. ORGANIZATION

How the Filipino forces were organized at the outbreak of the Philippine-American War becomes a point of reference in examining their organization. As pointed out in the earlier chapter, the Filipino forces—from being a conglomeration of groups of volunteers brought in by their local chiefs or landlords to fight the Spaniards—slowly evolved into a more organized force. Aguinaldo's intention to re-organize his revolutionary forces can be gleaned from two considerations. First, the Filipino forces needed to be more organized and have a command and control, in order to coordinate all their military operations and bring them to bear on the Spaniards. Second, a standing army was necessary if they were to become a sovereign nation, recognized by other nations. The second consideration was obviously in preparation for the impending Philippine independence from Spanish rule (which they expected). Aguinaldo's advisers believed that a standing army would show a high level of civilization and hasten their recognition for independence.¹⁵¹ The re-organization taken by the Filipino revolutionary forces was slowly taking the form of the conventional type. To this effect, Aguinaldo issued a decree on 30 July 1898, setting down the organization, composition, and basic regulations for a standing army of the Philippines.¹⁵² The army was modeled after existing armies at that time, with all the standard military arms and branches.¹⁵³ With this in mind, the Filipino revolutionary forces were now organized by regions and provinces. Troops were organized into battalions, composed of four to six companies depending on the size and importance of the province.¹⁵⁴ Each company was to have 100 enlisted men, with four sergeants, eight corporals and 88 privates, commanded by a captain and

¹⁵⁰ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 32.

¹⁵¹ Brian McAllister Linn, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War, 1899–1902* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 12.

¹⁵² Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 32.

¹⁵³ Ricardo Trota Jose, *The Philippine Army, 1935–1942* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1992), 10.

¹⁵⁴ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 32–33.

assisted by a first lieutenant and a second lieutenant.¹⁵⁵ For the battalions, it was to be commanded by a lieutenant colonel, with two majors, a color lieutenant (flag bearer), a commissary officer, and a gunsmith.¹⁵⁶ A navy, however small, was likewise established, composed of small vessels armed with small guns, with the mission to protect the Philippine waters.¹⁵⁷ Professionalism and systems thinking were likewise made a concern for the army. To this end, Aguinaldo tapped General Antonio Luna, deemed to be the most qualified officer at that time, and who had also undergone military schooling in Europe.¹⁵⁸ In line with the need to professionalize the army, a military academy—*Academia Militar*—was established in on 25 October 1898, to cater to the officer needs of the army.¹⁵⁹ The existence, however, of the military academy was short-lived due to the outbreak of the Philippine-American War. The Filipino revolutionary forces were in the process of transforming themselves with all of the trappings of a conventional army. From being a rag-tag band of revolutionary forces, it was now called the Army of Liberation of the Philippines, though still in its fledgling state.¹⁶⁰

In terms of strength, the Filipino forces, by January 1898, were estimated at 50,000 in Luzon, with about 20,000 of them armed with a variety of rifles—Mausers, Remingtons, Muratas, and Ambers.¹⁶¹ An estimated 20,000 additional men were in the Visayas and Mindanao area, 8,000 of whom had firearms.¹⁶² Those who had no firearms were armed with bolos, bows and arrows, clubs, and bamboo spears.

When war broke out with the Americans, the Philippine Army was initially organized in a conventional fashion. True to their conventional form, Filipino forces fought the Americans by massing their troops. Companies would establish defensive positions along the American's axis of advance. From prepared defensive positions, the

¹⁵⁵ Jose, *The Philippine Army, 1935–1942*, 11.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 36–37.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 34–35.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 38–39.

¹⁶⁰ Jose, *The Philippine Army, 1935–1942*, 10.

¹⁶¹ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 45.

¹⁶² Ibid.

Filipinos would fight the Americans toe-to-toe. However, against a trained and well-armed force, the Filipinos did not stand much of a chance against American military superiority. By massing their forces to fight the enemy, the Filipinos became easy prey for the Americans' superior firepower. This was manifested in numerous battles, a good example being the battle for Caloocan. Filipino forces under General Antonio Luna, numbering about 4,000 troops, tried to put up a defense, but American forces under General Arthur MacArthur,¹⁶³ backed by naval gunfire and artillery, crushed the Filipino forces and evicted them from their defensive positions.¹⁶⁴ The next defensive lines established by Filipino forces would be in defense of Malolos, Aguinaldo's seat of government. The Americans again won. Despite putting up stiff resistance, Luna's forces succumbed to the pressure of the American attack.¹⁶⁵

Faced with defeats, Aguinaldo shifted to guerrilla warfare by mid-November 1899.¹⁶⁶ By electing a strategy of guerrilla warfare, the Filipino forces reconstituted to smaller units in order not to present themselves as a large target to the Americans. An example of how Filipino forces were organized into smaller units can be gleaned from the guerrillas of Panay. The smallest unit was the guerrilla fraction composed of seven riflemen and two bolomen, led by a sergeant. Two or three fractions made up a guerrilla band under an officer, and two or three bands made up a guerrilla group led by a chief.¹⁶⁷ The organizational set-up allowed the Filipino forces to easily avoid American forces and then re-group into larger numbers when the opportunity presented itself for an attack against American forces. By choosing to re-organize into small units, and employing the small unit tactics, the Filipino forces staved off annihilation by the American forces. Although the Filipino guerrillas were eventually defeated, it came at a greater cost for the Americans by dragging the war to its limits.

Without a doubt, the Philippine-American War exemplifies one of Arquilla's defining characteristics of irregular warfare, the use of small units.

¹⁶³ Father of General Douglas MacArthur

¹⁶⁴ Silbey, *A War of Frontier and Empire: The Philippine-American War, 1899–1902*, 78–81.

¹⁶⁵ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 50–51.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 55–58.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 57–58.

D. TACTICS / DOCTRINE

How an army chooses to fight very much defines how it is organized. This maxim closely describes how the Filipino forces fought the Philippine-American War. In the early stages of the war, Filipino forces chose to fight in a conventional manner. Hence, they organized their forces along conventional lines. However, with hard-learned lessons, Aguinaldo's forces had no other option but to fight guerrilla warfare. This decision was based on their experience and tradition, as well as the external circumstances and threat that they were now facing. Small unit tactics became the convention against much larger, superior American forces. Raids, ambushes, and hit-and-run operations became the common tactics for the Filipinos.¹⁶⁸ Attacks against American forces were of the Filipinos' own choosing, deciding when and where to fight. This enabled the Filipino guerrillas to evade a fight when faced by an overwhelming force, while engaging in a fight only when they had the advantage. In order to do this, the Filipino guerrillas blended with the population. It was an advantage used to the maximum by the guerrillas. If they were not engaging enemy forces, Filipino guerrillas would simply hide their firearms and mix with the population. After an attack, they would again hide their firearms and melt back into the population. Filipino guerrillas were lost in the shadows of the population, making it hard for the American forces to pursue them. This was also a clear indication that the guerrillas had the popular support of their fellow Filipinos, and this partly explained the reason why heavier hostilities between the Filipino guerrillas and the Americans lasted up to mid-1902. The popular support of the population for the guerrillas made it difficult for the American forces to immediately contain the insurgency.

While there were still pockets of resistance in other areas after the surrender of General Malvar of Batangas to the Americans on 16 April 1902, but none that were serious enough to challenge American sovereignty on the islands.¹⁶⁹ However, an exception was the American pacification of the Muslim areas in Southern Philippines which took longer, from 1902–1913. The reason why it took longer for the Americans to

¹⁶⁸ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 57–58.

¹⁶⁹ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 278–279.

pacify the Muslims can be attributed to several factors. First, the Muslims were united by their religion Islam. The Muslims were concerned about preserving their distinct Muslim community and their way of life, a fact that the Muslims had manifested way back during the arrival of the Spaniards.¹⁷⁰ Second, was the Muslim's indomitable warrior spirit. At an early age, the Muslim warrior was taught to skillfully use his edged weapons.¹⁷¹ The Americans, however, combining a pacification campaign and military superiority, eventually subdued the Muslim insurgents.

The stubbornness of the guerrillas and the Filipino people against American occupation brought extreme ugliness to the Philippine-American War. Brutality became an instrument used by both Filipino and American forces. To weaken the enemy's resistance, the American forces resorted to brutality to soften the Filipinos' will to fight.¹⁷² On the other hand, extreme measures, including torture, were employed by the Americans, and were met with an angry and hateful response from the Filipinos.¹⁷³ American atrocities were answered with Filipino atrocities and vice-versa. The best known example of this brutality was the infamous "Balangiga Massacre" on the island of Samar on 28 September 1901.¹⁷⁴ The guerrillas, together with the townspeople of Balangiga, had suffered enormously from the pacification campaign of the Americans. In response, the guerrillas and the locals attacked the garrison of C Company, 9th U.S. Infantry stationed at Balangiga. This resulted in the death of 48 American officers and men. In retaliation, the Americans forces, under Brigadier General Smith, swept Samar with orders to kill anybody who was ten years or older, and thus capable of carrying arms.¹⁷⁵ The incident, along with others of similar brutality, was a testament to the attempt by both sides to influence the actions of the other. For the Filipinos, the brutality was meant to show the American forces that fights would be ugly and costly, so that the

¹⁷⁰Arnold, *The Moro War: How America Battled a Muslim Insurgency in the Philippine Jungle, 1902–1913*, 14.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 46–47.

¹⁷² Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 270–272.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 270–273.

¹⁷⁴ Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899–1902*, 310–313.

¹⁷⁵ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 272.

brutality might make the Americans give up their occupation and leave the country. For the Americans, they were sending a message to the Filipino guerrillas, and more particularly to the population, through the use of brutal measures, that it was not worth fighting the American forces. The brutality was meant to weaken the resolve of the guerrillas to fight, and the population's support for the guerrillas. In the end, it was the Filipino population who got tired of the sufferings caused by the conflict, and thus weakened their support for the guerrillas.

E. WEAPONS / TECHNOLOGY

The Philippine-American War did not demonstrate any changes in terms of weapons and technologies used. The Filipino guerrillas practically had the same kind of weapons that they had during their revolution against Spain. As the Philippine-American War occurred immediately after the Spanish surrender to the American forces, the weapons used were a carry-over from the preceding conflict. It was still a mix of rifles—Mausers, Remingtons, Muratas and Ambers.¹⁷⁶ The only difference was that there were an increased number of rifles as a result of the weapons and ammunition Aguinaldo had purchased while in exile.¹⁷⁷ This was further increased with the defection of Filipino militias with arms, organized under Spanish Governor-General Agustin, to the side of the Filipino revolutionaries.¹⁷⁸ Meanwhile, bladed instruments remained a staple weapon for the Filipino guerrillas—bolos, bows and arrows, clubs, and bamboo spears.

For support weapons, the Filipino guerrillas had artillery pieces captured from the Spaniards, or Spanish guns that were turned over to the Filipinos by the Americans before the Philippine-American hostilities erupted.¹⁷⁹ Likewise, a number of arsenals were built for the refill of cartridges and the manufacture of bullets, but quality was always a problem.¹⁸⁰ The Filipinos certainly did not yet have the technological capacity

¹⁷⁶ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 45.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 33–34.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 34.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 33.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 34.

to produce quality ammunition—compared to those produced by more developed countries at that time.

It was also during the period that Aguinaldo organized the Philippine Navy. Ships were comprised of vessels captured from the Spanish, while others were donated by vessel owners sympathetic to the Filipino revolution.¹⁸¹ These vessels were armed with small guns, and were utilized for inter-island transport of weapons and supplies of the revolution.¹⁸²

Overall, the Filipino revolutionaries had barely enough weapons to challenge the American forces. In addition, not only did they have an inadequate supply of ammunition, but it was of poor quality as well. The predicament of the Filipino forces looked even worse in comparison to the American forces, which had better weapons and an adequate supply of ammunition. The heavier American artillery was likewise superior to the few, light artillery pieces the Filipino forces had.¹⁸³

F. ANALYSIS / CONCLUSION

If the Philippine Revolution of 1896 gave birth to the Philippine Army, it can be said that the Philippine-American War was its infancy. The period saw the formative years of the Philippine Army, which developed at the same time it waged a revolution against a far superior armed force. The Filipino forces adopted a conventional organization, only to find that they could not fight another conventional armed force on equal terms. They had to shift to guerrilla warfare in order to somehow negate the advantages of their enemy, and prolong the war with the hope that a protracted war would force the enemy to abandon the occupation. A shift to guerrilla warfare called for a change in organization, from deployment of a centralized, large force to decentralized, small, and very mobile forces. Raids, ambushes, and hit-and-run attacks became the prevalent tactics—if only to sting the enemy. Combined with inferior (and a lack of) weapons, guerrilla warfare was the only remaining option to fight the strong colonial

¹⁸¹ Jose, *The Philippine Army, 1935–1942*, 11–12.

¹⁸² Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 37.

¹⁸³ Silbey, *A War of Frontier and Empire: The Philippine-American War, 1899–1902*, 73.

forces. The only advantage the Filipino forces had, although only for a limited period, was their knowledge of the terrain, acclimatization to the local weather, and the support of the population. Overall, the American colonial era was again reminiscent of Arquilla's fundamentals of irregular warfare: the Filipinos, greatly under-resourced, had to fight by way of guerrilla tactics, employing small units, and with the objective of wearing down the enemy and draining its resources, in the hope that the enemy would give up its occupation over time.

AMERICAN COLONIAL ERA WARFARE	
Force	Filipino Revolutionaries
Small Units	X
Comparatively Under Resourced	X
Irregular Tactics / Doctrine	X
Terrorism	
Leveraging existing Technology	X
Protracted Conflict	X
Attrition Objectives	X

Figure 5. American Colonial Era Filipino irregular warfare characteristics

While the revolutionaries were able to prolong the conflict and produce a costly effect on the colonial forces, it is worthy to note the counter-actions of the American forces in bringing down the revolution. Apart from their armed superiority, two factors can be attributed to the success of the American forces in defeating the revolution: first, the use of indigenous forces; and second, the policy of "benevolent assimilation." The Americans used indigenous forces to serve as guides and interpreters in their military operations against the Filipino revolutionaries. This step was very similar to the use of

Indian scouts in the American West while fighting the Indian.¹⁸⁴ The Americans deftly used indigenous forces to fight against their own countrymen, pitting one tribe against other tribes. The capture of Aguinaldo in Palanan, Isabela with the use of the Macabebe scouts of Pampanga provided an example of its effectiveness.¹⁸⁵ These indigenous forces later became the Philippine Scouts, initially as civilians under contract, and later as a unit under the U.S. Army.¹⁸⁶

At a more strategic standpoint, the American policy of “benevolent assimilation,” somehow, had softened the resistance of the Filipinos to American colonial rule. In McKinley’s proclamation in December 1899, he avowed that the U.S. had come to the Philippines to bring the blessings of peace and individual freedom to the Filipinos; and further, that it was the aim of the U.S. to win the confidence, respect, and affection of the people of the Philippines.¹⁸⁷ What followed was called “Filipinization”—the giving of opportunity to the Filipinos for self-government.¹⁸⁸ By allowing them to slowly participate in governance, the Filipinos, particularly the elites, were encouraged to work out a peaceful campaign for independence. Not only did it provide a peaceful environment, but more so, it ensured that their social status and material possessions would be maintained and protected. As more Filipinos become more encouraged with the Filipinization process, the population’s support of the guerrilla movement somehow waned over time. The American policy was a welcome change in contrast to the Spanish policy during the Spanish colonial period—where Filipinos were treated with racial prejudice, calls for reform were unheeded, and the colony was not represented in the Spanish Cortes.¹⁸⁹

The Philippine-American War exemplifies a conflict between the weak and the strong. Beset by a great lack of resources, the Filipino forces were forced to

¹⁸⁴ Alfred W. McCoy, *Closer than Brothers: Manhood at the Philippine Military Academy* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1999), 17.

¹⁸⁵ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 269–270.

¹⁸⁶ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 75–78.

¹⁸⁷ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 314.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 314–315.

¹⁸⁹ Constantino and Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*, 156.

innovate, particularly in terms of organization and tactics, in order to pursue their goals. Resorting to irregular warfare provided the Filipino forces with the means to counter the colonial forces, though they were ultimately defeated. Towards the end of American colonial rule, Filipinos demonstrated the capability to govern themselves. Thus, they had to prepare to take charge of their own state affairs, including the defense of the country. Towards this end, the Filipino armed forces, in preparation for Philippine independence, would revert back to the development of a conventional, standing army under the auspices of their now American friends. However, the events of World War II found the Filipinos, this time fighting side-by-side with the Americans, going back to what they do best, their forte—waging guerrilla warfare against the might of the Japanese invasion.

V. WORLD WAR II, RESISTANCE TO THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION

“I do not say this jokingly. Most Americans have merely assumed that guerrilla activity in wartime Philippines must have been initiated by U.S. escapees like me and that we then coaxed or bullied Filipinos into supporting us. This was not the case at all. Most Americans who managed to evade the Japanese in 1942 wanted to get back to their units some time, some way, or just escape from the Philippines and get to Australia, or China, or somewhere safe. Overwhelmingly, Filipinos came to us and begged us to lead them and help fight their oppressors.”

-Robert Lapham, Lt. U.S.A., Luzon Guerrilla Armed Forces (LGAF)¹⁹⁰

A. INTRODUCTION

The Imperial Japanese occupation of the Philippines was, if not the golden age of irregular warfare, then at least the most widely celebrated era of irregular warfare in Filipino history.¹⁹¹ All of the characteristics associated with irregular warfare were present, minus terrorism (as defined in this thesis). Fundamentally, it will be made clear that the Filipino American guerrilla forces fighting during the occupation were not using conventional means in any way.

The characteristics of this era also support the main idea of this thesis. That irregular warfare is born from a lack of means, resources, and military might to directly challenge and attempt to overthrow the enemy, therefore forcing the irregular warrior into an indirect strategy of attrition, exhaustion, and erosion, was overwhelmingly seen throughout the Filipino guerrilla campaigns of World War II.

The Filipino and American forces, which remained in operation after U.S. General Wainwright's, 7 May 1942, surrender order, operated for almost four years with astonishingly limited means and support. Despite an often-overwhelming lack of weapons, food, medicine, transportation, reinforcements, communications and information, Filipino guerrillas managed to conduct extensive operations and be a serious

¹⁹⁰ Robert Lapham and Bernard Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerrillas in the Philippines, 1942–1945* (The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 25–26.

¹⁹¹ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 352.

presence on the battlefield throughout the war. Guerrilla operations included, but were not limited to: offensive operations against the Japanese, intelligence collection and dissemination operations for allied and indigenous forces, information operations, psychological operations against the Japanese and the Filipino population, and direct support to the allied invasion and allied liberation operations.

The organization of the many units differed greatly—from the larger, more organized U.S. Armed Forces in the Philippines- North Luzon (USAFIP-NL),¹⁹² led by U.S. Army officer Russell Volckmann, to smaller rogue guerrilla groups more focused on banditry¹⁹³. However, the fundamentals were the same: the majority of the groups were entirely made up of Filipinos, who had to recruit and operate secretly, and who had an absolute reliance on the civilian population for protection and information, all the while operating against the Japanese Imperial Army who was at the apogee of their strength from 1941 through to 1943 and beyond.

The tactics and doctrine used were all surprising similar, yet greatly varied—with raids and ambushes being the most popular offensive actions. Information operations used radio, paper, and word of mouth through the bamboo telegraph. Intelligence collection focused on strategic and tactical targets and was one of the most critical aspects of the campaign. The different guerrilla groups all seemed to innately understand that there was a significant need for psychological operations. These were conducted against all parties: the Japanese, themselves, and most importantly, the population. Filipinos who collaborated with the Japanese, spied, or became traitors were dealt with according to a sometimes sickeningly ruthless and brutal guerrilla law. Undoubtedly, this guerrilla campaign had a strategic impact on the Pacific theatre, forcing the Japanese to keep a larger force than it would have liked in the Philippine Islands, just to maintain control.¹⁹⁴ In such a massive and resource-intense theater as the Pacific, this forced the Japanese to spread thin, and ultimately led to a situation where they could not defend everything that they had taken. This contributed to Allied success throughout the ocean.

¹⁹² Mike Guardia, *American Guerrilla: The Forgotten Heroics of Russell W. Volckmann* (Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers, 2010), Introduction.

¹⁹³ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 314.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 309.

Born from the cultural DNA of the Filipino prehistory/pre-colonial warrior, and building on techniques learned through the hard lessons of the Spanish and American Colonial periods, the Filipino irregular warrior honed his skills in the crucible of World War II occupation. He emerged extremely savvy, confident, armed, and organized for guerrilla warfare.

B. ENVIRONMENT / SITUATION

The history leading up to the guerrilla campaign in the Philippines is long and detailed. Much of it is focused on strategic decisions made by the major players, both globally and specifically in Pacific Theatre. These decisions had direct ramifications for the disposition of the Philippines. A detailed review of this history, while interesting, is not necessary to understanding the irregular warfare campaign being examined for this study. That being said, there are a few key points which should be discussed, and are tantamount to the developing guerrilla campaign.

As previously discussed in the colonial chapters, the people and government of the Philippines had been moving steadily, if not slowly, towards independence. Culturally, the country continued to consist of many separate cultural nations, held together by the glue of the United States. Geography, economics, religion, language, and other factors continued to reinforce long-standing divisions. However, the Filipinos had worked hard to make significant steps to come together as one nation. One of the largest steps was in November 1935, when the Philippines gained Commonwealth status from the United States and inaugurated Manuel Quezon as the President. This same year would see the Japanese invading China.¹⁹⁵ Quezon would still be in power when the war would come to the Philippines. Despite this significant step towards independence, the Commonwealth of the Philippines was still very much reliant and dependent on the United States for many aspects of national sovereignty, to include but not limited to, the national defense. It is significant to note that the United States continued to believe that the Philippines was strategically important to U.S. national power in the Pacific. Furthermore, with the ratification of Philippine Commonwealth Act No.1, the National

¹⁹⁵ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 352.

Defense Act, the U.S. exhibited their belief that the Philippines would be more of an asset than a liability.¹⁹⁶ The National Defense Act placed General Douglas MacArthur as the Field Marshall of the Philippine Army (PA), and detailed a ten-year plan to organize a citizen army including a 10,000 man regular force, a Constabulary, a 400,000 man reserve force, a modest literal navy, and a small air corp.¹⁹⁷

As war with Japan in the Pacific seemed inevitable, the effort to increase the size of the Philippine Army (PA) was accelerated, although, unfortunately, even by the start of the war the number of units was still inadequate to defend the whole of the nation. Trained soldiers were considered good, but above the battalion level the PA lacked trained officers and would be reliant on U.S. officers to lead them.¹⁹⁸ In July 1941, Roosevelt ordered the forces of the Commonwealth into service. All PA units were incorporated into the U.S. Army and placed under the command of Gen MacArthur. The command was titled the U.S. Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE).¹⁹⁹ As war came to MacArthur, the people of the Philippines, and the USAFFE, the allied decision of “Europe first” would have lasting ramifications on the outcome in the Philippines. Europe first would severely limit any aid to MacArthur’s command, forcing him to make do with what was already on hand, and forcing the Filipinos to look to irregular means after the defeat of the USAFFE in the Philippines.²⁰⁰

In order to understand the environment around the guerrilla campaign, it is also necessary to look briefly at the conventional defense of the Philippines. MacArthur began the war with a small air force, an even smaller coastal navy, and about 10 divisions of 8,500 men each, roughly 15,000 U.S. and 65,000 Filipino, with seven of these divisions on Luzon. Luzon being the largest island of the Philippines and at the time also contained the capital of Manila, including Manila harbor, the island redoubt of Corregidor, Clark Air Base, and the naval bases in Subic Bay and Cavite. On the first day of the war MacArthur’s air force was almost completely destroyed by what should not have been a

¹⁹⁶ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 387–388.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 354–355.

¹⁹⁸ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 265.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 267.

²⁰⁰ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 393.

surprise attack. This defeat, along with his limited naval assets, and the upcoming decision of Europe first left him with only a land-based army, and limited means to defend against any attack from the air.²⁰¹

From 8 December, through 12 December, the Japanese Army made unopposed landings throughout the Philippines, to include large forces on Luzon.²⁰² This turn of events, coupled with the lack of either a naval or an air defense, the strategic understanding that no reinforcements were coming, and his personal observation of the inability of Filipino units to stop the battle-hardened Japanese veterans,²⁰³ led MacArthur to make the decision, with regret, to execute War plan Orange (WPO). Under WPO, MacArthur was to abandon Manila and declare the city open, then retreat all forces to the Bataan peninsula and the island redoubt of Corregidor.²⁰⁴ From these positions, it was planned that he might be able to hold out up to six months (theoretically) until reinforcements could be made available.

Unfortunately for the men of USAFFE and the civilians on Bataan, when the forces retreated, they brought enough ammunition with them, but only enough food for less than a month. Little food, compounded by the fact that few medical supplies were brought along on the retreat, meant that the defense of Bataan and Corregidor rapidly devolved into a battle for survival against the jungle, starvation, disease, and the Japanese.²⁰⁵ On 3 January 1942, when the decision was finally made by Eisenhower's War Plans Division that no relief convoy would be fought through to Bataan, Stimson Secretary of War remarked, "there are times when men have to die."²⁰⁶ Die they did, and in great numbers.

By 9 April, Bataan had fallen, and of the initial 85,000 defenders, approximately 72, 000 became prisoners, of which it is estimated that 20,000 died within the next few

²⁰¹ Costello, *The Pacific War 1941–1945*, 160–163.

²⁰² Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 282–285.

²⁰³ Costello, *The Pacific War 1941–1945*, 172.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 72.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 184.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 186.

weeks during the death march from Bataan.²⁰⁷ On 21 February, President Quezon evacuated Corregidor via submarine, followed by the retreat of MacArthur via PT boat on 11 March 1942.²⁰⁸ With these retreats, General Wainwright was left in charge of the command, which was re-designated, U.S. Forces in the Philippines (USFIP).²⁰⁹ What followed on Corregidor after MacArthur's retreat can only be described as hell on Earth. With Bataan now under their control, and with freedom to move at will in the skies and seas, the Japanese were able to attack Corregidor non-stop with artillery day and night. The deluge created an atmosphere of hot stinking death and steel, the only relief from which was inside massive reinforced tunnels, which seemed like death traps. One Corregidor defender, U.S. Navy Engineer Bruce E. Johns, who would be held as a Japanese prisoner from 1942 to 1945, nonchalantly described his time in the tunnels as "one of the hardest months of the war... to go outside was to invite death."²¹⁰ By 6 May, the Japanese had invaded Corregidor and captured the island, forcing Wainwright to issue a surrender order to all forces in the Philippines to cease operations and surrender to Japanese forces.²¹¹

Counter to Wainwright's surrender order, MacArthur, from Australia, issued his own order to any U.S. and Filipino forces, throughout the islands, still intact, and not under Japanese control, to initiate guerrilla operations. Though it was a difficult and confusing time for American soldiers on the island,²¹² though many had received conflicting orders, a large amount of fighters still looked to join up with a resistance

²⁰⁷ McRaven, *Spec Ops*, 244.

²⁰⁸ Costello, *The Pacific War 1941–1945*, 212–213.

²⁰⁹ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 291.

²¹⁰ Bruce E. Johns, "Personal Diary WWII" (Johns was a U.S. P.O.W. held by the Japanese from 1942 until 1945), excerpt from August 13th 1942 entry.

²¹¹ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 305–306.

²¹² Bernard Norling, *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon*, (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1999), 89.

group and begin a guerrilla war.²¹³ For the Filipino, the decision was much easier, for “as the Japanese themselves suspected... almost all Filipinos were guerrillas.”²¹⁴ The guerrilla campaign had begun.

The guerrilla campaign began almost immediately after the landing of Japanese forces on Luzon in December of 1941. It would last until the Japanese surrender on 15 August 1945, a total of forty-four months, or three and three quarter years. By the end of December 1941, at the start of the war, many Filipino units had already been cut off from the main force, which was retreating into the Bataan Peninsula. There were also a significant number of individuals left behind, for various reasons, by units that made it to Bataan. Other individuals and small groups would also escape Bataan, as the Japanese victory became inevitable. Many of these men made it through Japanese lines and moved north to link up with other U.S. and Filipino soldiers still on the loose.

By the time Corregidor fell in May of 1942, MacArthur was ordering any remaining forces not already captured to initiate guerrilla operations.²¹⁵ The organization of guerrilla groups happened in many different ways, however the two most common methods were: for still-intact units to transition into guerrilla units, and for individual Filipino and American leaders—who sought out like-minded others—to form guerrilla units. Many Filipinos and Americans continued to want to fight the Japanese badly; they actively searched for guerrilla bands to join in order to carry on. The organizational period was very fluid, and many organizations changed significantly throughout the entire campaign.

Due to the significant effort required by the Japanese to take Bataan and Corregidor, most of the main force units were occupied until the summer of 1942. This gave the guerrillas significant time to organize and begin operations without significant counterinsurgency operations from the Japanese. These 1942 guerrilla operations were often violent and proved positive results for the guerrillas as they molested the Japanese rear areas. As summer turned to fall, the Japanese began an aggressive campaign to root

²¹³ Ibid., 307.

²¹⁴ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 405.

²¹⁵ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 307.

out those guerrilla units that had made themselves known on the battlefield. The Japanese took severe retributions against the Filipino civilian population, which was supporting the guerrillas, as well as against the actual guerrillas, when they could be found.²¹⁶ The Japanese reprisals wreaked havoc on the guerrilla units and the population; many units were forced to disperse, and many leaders were captured or killed. By the summer of 1943, MacArthur had issued a “lie low” order to the guerrillas that he was in contact with. They were to stop directly engaging the Japanese and instead focus on gathering and transmitting strategic intelligence, which would be critical to retaking the island.²¹⁷ From this time on through 1943 and 1944, the guerrillas focused on intelligence, organization, training, information, and psychological operations. Offensive operations with Japanese units still happened but with less frequency than in 1941 through early 1943. Both sides fell into a cycle of guerrilla operations, and Japanese counter-guerrilla operations, with the results varying. Sometimes entire guerrilla forces would be decimated, other times they would escape unscathed. The most successful were the units that focused on survival, intelligence gathering, and counterintelligence operations.

In October of 1944, General Douglas MacArthur returned to the Philippines, when he landed on Leyte Island. From this point on, the majority of guerrilla units began to focus on providing intelligence and support to allied units for the upcoming invasions of their specific areas. By January of 1945, the invasion of Luzon had begun. Once they had regained physical contact with allied forces, guerrilla units began to be well supplied. Operations were focused on direct support to liberation operations. Guerrillas often served as guides, scouts, and security. One of the most famous examples of this was the significant support provided to the Ranger rescue of POWs at Cabanatuan.²¹⁸

When General Yamashita, the Japanese commander in the Philippines (nicknamed the “Tiger of Malaya”) surrendered in August of 1945, he did so to a guerrilla leader: Russell Volckmann.²¹⁹ For the guerrillas, the war against the Japanese

²¹⁶ Norling, *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon*, 64.

²¹⁷ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 319–320.

²¹⁸ McRaven, *Spec Ops*, 245–286.

²¹⁹ Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 145–146.

had ended; however, it would be years before many would find peace. Guerrillas and the Filipino population struggled with demobilization and reintegration. Many crimes were committed in the name of guerrilla survival; individuals and entire families were killed or murdered as collaborators and spies. In some cases, these actions were justified in the minds of the perpetrators and the community—in other cases, not so. Identifying who actually was and was not a guerrilla was another issue. Record keeping was dangerous inside Japanese occupied territory; therefore, many guerrilla leaders did not keep any.²²⁰ All of these issues, and more, stuck around for many years as the Filipino people entered a new era of independence.

Volumes have been written about the Philippine guerrilla warfare campaign during World War II. The overwhelming majority, though, have focused on American-led guerrilla units on Luzon. However, from these primary and secondary accounts we can gain a good sense of how World War II cemented the Filipino irregular warfare tradition. By examining the organizations, tactics, and use of technology, we can see that Filipinos were unquestionably under-resourced, and forced to fight in an indirect and irregular manner.

C. ORGANIZATION

Guerrilla units operating in the Philippines from 1942 until 1945 ran a gambit of different organizational designs. Because of the overwhelming motivations to join guerrilla units, there was rarely a shortage of volunteers. There were many different reasons for joining—to include, but not limited to: vengeance for Japanese cruelty, loyalty to the United States, Filipino nationalistic desires, and pragmatic reasons. Many Filipinos realized that life under the Japanese would continue to be difficult; therefore, with food hard to come by, being a guerrilla was a type of insurance from hunger.²²¹ The Filipino auxiliary was extensive, with most Filipinos understanding that it was their duty to insure that the guerrillas were fed in order to continue operations. Many Filipino

²²⁰ Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 152–155.

²²¹ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 311.

guerrillas also believed that they would be reimbursed by the U.S. when they inevitably retook control of the islands from the Japanese.²²²

With so many reasons to become a guerrilla, there of course was no shortage of units. U.S. military historians put the number of guerrilla units operating around 75.²²³ Filipino historians write that in almost every province of the country, of which there are 80, there existed at least one guerrilla unit.²²⁴ Furthermore, smaller units, units that were destroyed, or units which later merged, may not have been identified or recognized by postwar investigators.²²⁵ As already previously stated, much of the writing, and therefore historical recognition, has gone to units led by Americans. This overlooks the fact that the overwhelming majority of units were manned and led by Filipinos. In North Luzon alone, it was estimated that there were less than 200 Americans present in the early days of the guerrilla campaign. Only 10 were alive when the U.S. Army returned in 1945, and of the CAF, only one had survived.²²⁶ It is estimated that there were 240,000 active guerrillas during the campaign—and of those 33,000 were on Mindanao, where conditions were much quieter. Luzon was home to roughly 80,000 guerrillas, of which around 20,000 ended up being associated with Volckmann's USFIP-NL. The next largest was Lampham's LGAF 13,000, followed by Ramsey's guerrillas and Markings guerrillas, 12,000 each, and Anderson's forces, 7,000.²²⁷ These numbers leave approximately another 35,000 to be distributed between the Huks and other various smaller organizations. What is not represented are the overwhelming numbers of Filipino leaders who often stood side-by-side with their American counterparts—who, though in the minority, managed to take the lion's share of historical glory. These Filipinos include such legendary names as Ramon Magsaysay, Ferdinand Marcos, Marking (Marcos Augustin), Captains Guillermo Nakar, Manuel Enriquez, Manzano, Mondonedo, Manuel

²²² Ibid., 312.

²²³ Cherilyn A. Walley, "A Century of Turmoil: America's Relationship with the Philippines," *Special Warfare* (September 2004), 7.

²²⁴ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 314.

²²⁵ Norling, *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon*, 18.

²²⁶ Ibid., 137.

²²⁷ Ibid., 178.

Roxas, and Juan Pajota, just to name a few.²²⁸ It is important to note that as the Americans died, or rotated home after the war, few remained in the Philippines to carry on. This was not the case for the Filipinos who returned to their homes, rebuilt their lives, and carried their guerrilla traditions and experiences with them. For example, one of the most noted of these was Roxas, who became the Philippine President in 1946; his guerrilla experience stayed with him—and with many others—and shaped the Philippines for decades to come.²²⁹

The actual formation of these units was not what they might seem on paper, from the statement that many contained “tens of thousands” of guerrillas—their actual operational makeup was much different. Just as modern day U.S. Special Forces contain thousands of green berets, when actually operating, the teams are deployed in small units of 12 in order maximize effect and purpose while simultaneously decreasing signature and increasing survivability. The guerrillas of the Philippines operated in small cellular group, dispersed by areas, villages, safe camps, barangays, and islands. Volckman’s own organization was dispersed over much of Northern Luzon. Most raids, ambushes, and intelligence operations only took as many Filipinos as was necessary to surprise and overwhelm their target without creating a large signature.²³⁰ This is an important fact as it relates directly to Dr. Arquilla’s thesis that irregular warfare is defined by small units conducting guerrilla activities. The larger guerrilla units learned quickly that a large signature was not beneficial to survival. Take the example of Walter Cushing, who had spectacular success ambushing and killing Japanese in 1942. However, his entire force was annihilated, including Cushing himself, by the Japanese in less than 9 months.²³¹ As Cushing’s military victories became larger, he gained more attention—many civilian Filipinos knew his location, he became much easier to target by the Japanese, and he was

²²⁸ Ibid., Preface.

²²⁹ Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 151–153.

²³⁰ Ibid., 95, 102–103.

Norling, *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon*, 38, 48, 58–60.

²³¹ Ray C. Hunt and Bernard Norling, *Behind Japanese Lines: An American Guerrilla in the Philippines* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1986), 82.

Norling, *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon*, 5–13.

slaughtered after being betrayed by Filipinos who had been turned by the Japanese. After incidents like this, many units began to understand the need to keep things small and quiet; a dead guerrilla could not harass the Japanese.

As stated previously, there were general developmental trends for the guerrilla forces—pre-existing units that had transitioned, and units that were found and formed. An example was the Cagayan Apayo Forces (CAF), organized By CPT Ralph Praeger. Before the Japanese invasion, the CAF was Troop C, 26th Cavalry of the Filipino Scouts. During the retreat to the Bataan peninsula, Troop C was cut off, and did not make it. The squadron leadership disintegrated and the scout formation dissolved. Praeger and around 80 scouts chose instead to take the fight back to the Japanese, operating successfully until the Japanese decimated them in the fall of 1943. The surviving CAF members were then rolled up into Volckmann's USAIP-NL.²³² Volckmann is an interesting story of an individual whose unit surrendered on Bataan. Volckmann himself escaped north on Luzon, trying to find a guerrilla unit to work with; he had limited success until he was able to link up with Filipino Ifugao Tribal leaders. Only after he was able to ally with the local strongmen Kamayong of the Halip Tribe and Tamicpao of the Antipolo tribe was he able to gain protection, Filipino knowledge, and warriors to begin organizing and fighting with. Volckmann proved an exceptional leader and organizer, and as previously stated, his force would end the war as the largest and best organized of all the guerrilla formations.²³³

Another—more strictly Filipino—guerrilla organization was the Hukbalahap, or Huks. The Huks would gain worldwide attention as a large communist insurgency, which seriously threatened the Philippine Republic government control in the 1950s. However, during the Japanese occupation the Huks formed to fight their aggression. Hukbalahap is an abbreviation of Hukbo ng Bayan laban sa Hapon, or People's Anti-Japanese Army. The Huks emerged from already existing peasant social movements to fight the adversity of the Japanese. These communists understood the need for collective action; they

²³² Norling, *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon*, 19, 209–223.

²³³ Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 87–93.

organized well and fought ferociously.²³⁴ Some Huks were nationalistic and had grand designs but the near target was to expel the Japanese. The Huks policed the countryside, held and controlled their territory, and aggressively attacked the Japanese. Their ability to survive and thrive can be attributed to their in depth and complete solidarity against the Japanese. Because they could not be infiltrated, the Huks succeeded in keeping their locations and operations secret.²³⁵ The Huks developed a deep and aggressive network of civilians who also tried to “undercut” the Japanese government. By 1944, the Huks had around 12,000 active armed guerrillas, organized into roughly 76 squadrons based in central Luzon. It is important to note that the Huks were well outside of MacArthur’s or any other U.S. Forces Far East’s control.²³⁶ The Huks looked down on these other units as cowards who were hiding for their own survival. The Huks prided themselves on their aggressiveness and their cohesion. There were clashes between the Huks and U.S./Fil units, but this was an inevitable aspect of lack of communication, ulterior motives, massive stress, and few resources. However, the Huks contributed greatly to the war, engaging in some large battles between their squadrons, the Japanese, and Filipino Police Constabulary units. Their own leaders estimated that they killed around 20,000 Japanese troops, spies, collaborators, and puppet police constabulary troops.²³⁷

There was significant friction between the guerrilla organizations. Because of the many different leaders, organizations, backgrounds and resources, very often the guerrillas felt as if they were in competition with each other instead of working together. Communication was difficult between the organizations—terrain, geography, Japanese garrisons, and travel difficulties hindered attempts at unity.²³⁸ The different leaders of the groups harbored great jealousies against each other; they bickered and fought for resources, sometimes even clashing in battle. The problems were described as endemic, as they squabbled over rank, tactics, jurisdiction, objectives, and many other issues.²³⁹

²³⁴ Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 67.

²³⁵ Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 67–72.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 93, 104.

²³⁸ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 321–323.

²³⁹ Norling, *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon*, 177.

There was little intelligence and material sharing, little communication and no protection from each other or each other's infiltrators or informants.²⁴⁰ The Japanese preyed on these divisions and tried to exacerbate them, often turning groups on each other in order to draw them out and destroy them. These disunity problems would continue to plague the Philippines for another fifty years, long after the guerrilla war against the Japanese had ended.

The final point necessary for discussion on organization is the double-edged sword of the civilian population. Every account of the guerrilla campaign discusses how necessary it was to have the civilian population on the side of the guerrillas. The auxiliary provided communication, intelligence updates on the Japanese, transport, early warning, supplies, safe houses, and ratlines (underground railroads). The auxiliary were involved in every aspect of guerrilla life and operations. The guerrillas separated the civilian support into mainly combat support roles. Combat supporters provided food, water, technical, and intelligence support. Volckmann felt these civilians were "critical and provided the only lifeline" the guerrillas had.²⁴¹ Intelligence gathering was likely the most critical role the civilians played—the civilians provided Volckman's guerrillas with their greatest and only advantage over the Japanese: knowledge of terrain, enemy, weather, and situation.²⁴² Without the civilian auxiliary combat support, the guerrillas would have had no chance.

Unfortunately, the Japanese also knew this, so any and every opportunity was taken to sow discord, distrust, and to create infiltrators. If a civilian population were suspected of helping guerrillas, the Japanese would take vicious and brutal retribution against the population, until they got what they needed to target the guerrillas. The problem for the Japanese was that, even though this would provide tactical victories, it turned the population as a whole against the Japanese and the civilians would take any opportunity they could to help the guerrillas. The Japanese may have been winning the battles, but they were losing the war. The guerrillas had their own problems with the

²⁴⁰ Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 101.

²⁴¹ Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 108.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 109.

civilians, because of the threat of infiltrators, collaborators, and spies, the guerrillas had to be very careful. They needed the civilians for everything, but opening the organization up to outsiders was the quickest way of being found out by the Japanese. Therefore, the guerrillas had to walk a tight rope on how much they let the civilians know, versus, how much support they received. These issues often led to guerrillas being betrayed, and guerrillas using extrajudicial punishment against suspected infiltrators. Guerrilla warfare was a messy business, with civilians and troops often paying the price. These issues, like the others, would linger for many years.

D. TACTICS / DOCTRINE

The tactics and doctrine used by guerrilla forces during the Japanese occupation fit nicely into Dr. Aquilla's definition that irregular warfare has a focused on small-unit guerrilla and special operations tactics. What is important for this study is that the tactics used during the campaign were mixed, robust, imaginative, and aggressive. These operations also showed that the Filipino guerrilla during this conflict had reached a very serious and competent level. The Filipinos, built on their tribal DNA, used the lessons from the Spanish and American colonial conflicts and executed a very aggressive, detailed, and adaptive campaign against the Japanese occupiers. Filipino guerrilla operations of this period could be generally categorized into five groups: offensive, intelligence, counter intelligence, information, and direct support to allied invasion and liberation operations.

Offensive operations against the Japanese were the most common types of operations conducted by the guerrillas against the Japanese. They offered immediate results for the Filipino guerrillas and the civilian population. Japanese operations had bred significant animosity in the Filipinos—any opportunity for vengeance and to spill Japanese blood was looked upon favorably.²⁴³ Many on the battlefield had seen what the

²⁴³ Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 70–72.

Japanese troops did to troops and civilians alike; because of this, many harbored hatred. Summed up by one U.S. guerrilla, “I thought less of a Japanese life than of that of an animal.”²⁴⁴

Their attacks generally fell into two types: ambushes and raids. Because the guerrillas could rarely overwhelm the Japanese forces, they had to try to dictate when and how their engagements took place. Raids, or hit and run missions, maximized the theory of relative superiority, when a small force can gain a short but effective advantage over a larger force, then withdraw as the advantage wanes.²⁴⁵ Ambushes also worked well due to similar principles. The guerrillas had the advantage in the timing of the engagement; specifically they could pick the location, time, and decide to initiate or not. The Japanese often would try to lure the guerrillas onto their turf, in order to gain a decisive engagement more suited to their style of conventional combat. The Japanese would set ambushes and try to lure or entice the guerrillas. “The irregulars would pretend to take the bait, and would pepper the enemy for a bit with rifle fire from concealed positions just to pin him down long enough for Filipino civilians to flee out of harm’s way. Then the guerrillas would withdraw into the bush and try to induce the Japanese to follow them to places where they had set ambushes of their own.”²⁴⁶ Operations like this played to the guerrillas’ advantages of intelligence, terrain, and speed.

Most operations could be describes as “hit and run”; the guerrillas would hit their target, “after which my men would scatter, hide weapons, go back to their homes, and appear to the world as ordinary rice farmers.”²⁴⁷ An example of the speed and simplicity of a guerrilla operation comes from Lt. Camp, an American who led a band of guerrillas from the CAF. He had been entreated to battle by the local Japanese garrison commander, who had barricaded himself inside a Filipino provincial penitentiary. The guerrillas knew that they could not hope to win in a battle against the garrison on the garrison’s terms, but simultaneously, knew that they needed to show to the population that they had no fear of

²⁴⁴ Hunt and Norling, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 97.

²⁴⁵ McRaven, *Spec Ops*, 4–22.

²⁴⁶ Hunt and Norling, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 98.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

the garrison. "Lt. Camp was pondering the conundrum when he learned that some twenty Japanese soldiers were swimming in the Cagayan River. He promptly loaded several men in a sedan, drove up to the river's edge in broad daylight, slammed on the brakes, and had his men open fire, Chicago-style. Nine Japanese were killed at a cost of one attacker suffering a leg wound."²⁴⁸ These types of operations, while not decisive, undoubtedly were a major harassment to the Japanese, occupying their time and causing them to lose focus on other operations. These are extremely characteristic of guerrilla style irregular warfare strategy.

Raids were another commonly used tactic. A raid is a deliberate attack on an enemy position with a planned withdrawal. The objectives of these operations were many and varied; sometimes either to simply hit the Japanese, and sometimes to gain intelligence, or to recover combat supplies. An example is when a Philippine Army officer, Captain Rufino Baldwin, conducted a raid on the Japanese garrison at the Igoten mines. The Objective of the raid was to capture the mines manager, a man named Agota, who the guerrillas believed would then furnish them with names of collaborators and intelligence on Japanese activities.²⁴⁹

Offensive operations were successful from the point of view that they fell directly in line with the strategy. Harass the enemy, cause him to waste resources, frustrate him, and not allow him to gain a pitched and decisive battle. On the contrary, however, these operations would bring visibility to the guerrillas, and increase the pressure on them from the Japanese. The result was commonly that the guerrillas were destroyed or dispersed. Walter Cushing executed some of the most well-known and successful guerrilla ambushes of the war. In January of 1942, Cushing annihilated a ten-truck convoy killing all 69 of the Japanese soldiers; those who escaped the initial ambush fled into a field, and were chased down and killed by Filipinos with bolos knives. Only one Filipino was killed. Cushing was seen by Japanese aircraft during the attack and reported on. The Japanese, alerted to his operation, sent a large force from the garrison 25 miles north. When they arrived, they burned the village to the ground, and then relentlessly chased

²⁴⁸ Norling, *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon*, 76.

²⁴⁹ Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 78.

Cushing for 9 months until he was killed and his force dispersed.²⁵⁰ Cushing was successful tactically and operationally, but his heavy balance towards risky operations cost him his life and his force.

As stated previously, early losses of guerrilla forces, and retributions against civilians, caused MacArthur to issue his “lie low” order, which directed organized guerrilla units to desist from directly engaging Japanese forces, and instead focus on collecting and transmitting intelligence.²⁵¹ Intelligence collection was focused, according to “USAFIP-NL G2 files, on five priorities; evaluation of the enemy forces and capabilities, interrogation of prisoners, proliferation of special agencies, psychological warfare, and infiltration.”²⁵² These priorities show that intelligence was focused tactically and rolled up so that a strategic understanding of the situation could be developed. The issue strategically was that there was only ever one operational radio in the theater from the forces on Luzon (the island with the largest Japanese force and most USAFFE strategic objectives) to MacArthur’s USAFFE headquarters in Australia. From the invasion until March of 1943, this radio was with Praeger’s CAF in northern Luzon. After Praeger was captured, his radio was destroyed. Not until Volckmann’s force scrounged a radio and got it operational in August of 1944, did routine communication happen between the guerrillas and MacArthur. After Volckmann got up and running, the intelligence apparatus was ramped up to support the upcoming invasion, and liberation. For example, in November 1944, Volckmann’s forces found a crashed Japanese airplane. It had been carrying officials and papers relating to General Yamashita, the commander of all Japanese forces in the Philippines, and his defense plan for Luzon. Yamashita understood he could not repel a U.S. invasion on the beaches or defeat U.S. armor, instead he planned to move all six of his divisions into the mountains and make Luzon his last stand, and he would not defend the beaches. Volckmann’s guerrillas observed and

²⁵⁰ Norling, *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon*, 1–13.

²⁵¹ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 320.

²⁵² Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 109.

confirmed these troop movements by tracking his forces on the beaches and in the mountains. This information was then transmitted to MacArthur and was instrumental to the invasion plan.

The majority of intelligence collection for the guerrilla units, however, was focused at the tactical and operational levels on Japanese units. Civilians transmitted all types of data through the “bamboo telegraph”—a nickname for the passing of information from one Filipino to another until it reached its destination. This intelligence was important to moral, operations, and survival.

Because of the risks associated with being found out, the guerrillas focused a large percentage of their operations on counterintelligence—moving, hiding locations, and liquidating people who were threats. Collaborators, spies, traitors, and informants were dealt with ruthlessly. Guerrilla units were hard, even cruel, but most historians have forgiven this in the name of survival.²⁵³ It is conceded though, that some Filipinos took advantage of this situation for personal goals—killing not in the name of guerrilla survival, but actually killing out of vengeance.²⁵⁴ Not even the most ardent defenders of guerrilla justice could find reasons why whole families should be destroyed in the name of resistance.²⁵⁵

Information operations were also a large part of guerrilla life. Knowledge of what was going on was hard to find, yet very much in demand. Rumors flew in the early days, after the Japanese victories at Bataan and Corregidor. Any information was huge for moral. A number of guerrilla organizations were formed with the intended purpose of producing information and propaganda. Guerrilla radio transmitters and newspapers were used to strike back at Japanese information operations.²⁵⁶ Significant success can be attributed to these endeavors, particularly in relaying information from the outside. While there were transmitters on the islands, receivers were in limited supply, but those who could receive could get Radio San Francisco, which transmitted allied information and

²⁵³ Norling, *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon*, 111.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 156.

²⁵⁶ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 320.

propaganda.²⁵⁷ Important to this study is that guerrilla leaders generally understood that a significant portion of the population was sitting on the fence. The majority of the population hated the Japanese, but the Japanese had incredible leverage and offered them great incentives to turn against the resistance.²⁵⁸ Therefore, getting the word out about the population was extremely important. It was important for guerrilla leaders to have the general population *know* that the guerrillas were resisting, having success, and that the allies would soon return with an invasion force to liberate the island. Victors hold faith in the darkest of times, and the years 1942–1944 were extremely dark; sometimes the only hope was from a rumor sent through the bamboo telegraph.

The fifth type of operation the guerrillas were involved with was direct support to allied liberation operations. Prior to late 1944–1945, the purpose of the guerrilla operations was to attrite and harass the Japanese, gain intelligence, and keep the occupiers on their toes. As the invasion and liberation drew near, the purpose shifted to direct support to these allied conventional operations. After Volckmann made contact with MacArthur in October of 1944, he prepared his forces to support the Luzon invasion. Volckmann passed intelligence to the USAFFE HQ on beaches and enemy formations. After the invasion began on 9 January 1945, Volckmann linked up with MacArthur, got his forces supplied, and began to participate in the liberation. The USAFIP-NL participated in many attacks, and when they were finally able to go on the offensive. Units were engaged all over Luzon—for months the guerrillas participated in the most violent and aggressive battles of the Philippine Liberation campaign. In the end, Volckmann's forces fought their way to within 5 miles of Gen Yamashita's mountain holdout, before the Japanese Emperor signaled surrender.²⁵⁹

One of the most common tasks performed by the guerrillas during this campaign was as scouts and guides to U.S. invasion forces. The ranger raid on the U.S. POW camp at Cabanatuan was one of the more legendary examples of this task. The guerrillas, led by the courageous Captain Juan Pajota, were the instrumental factor in the success of the

²⁵⁷ Norling, *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon*, 132.

²⁵⁸ Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 82.

²⁵⁹ Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 123–145.

raid. Not only did Pajota and his guerrillas keep Colonel Mucci, the Ranger leader, from executing while there was a Japanese Battalion on the objective, but they also led the rangers to the objective, conducted all of the reconnaissance, provided the rangers with all of their intelligence, and then provided security. The security element outside of the camp saw the most action as they kept Japanese reinforcements from reaching the prison camp. Pajota's unit killed over 300 Japanese in the battle while only suffering nine minor casualties.²⁶⁰ This action kept the camp relatively quiet while the U.S. Rangers quickly beat the small prison guard force. The majority of their time in the camp was spent evacuating the severely weak prisoners. 512 U.S. POWs were recovered alive, then evacuated by the Filipino guerrillas and the Rangers. The U.S. Rangers took most of the glory, but the true credit and honor goes to the Filipinos who were the key to success.²⁶¹

E. WEAPONS / TECHNOLOGY

The bottom line with the weapons, technology, and other supplies used during the Japanese occupation by the Filipino guerrillas is that there was no effort put into developing new systems to win the day. Instead, the Filipino took what already existed, and that he possessed, however severely limited, and tried to use it to leverage an advantage.²⁶² The Filipinos were not trying to make new weapons, instead they used what they had and tried to win.

The majority of the weapons that the Filipino guerrilla used were small arms—rifles, pistols, edged weapons, grenades, and simple explosives such as dynamite. Almost no mortars or artillery made it through the Japanese invasions. The weapons that the guerrillas used had to come from one of four places: they were already in their possession before the war, or they were found, or scavenged from the battlefield, or they were left behind after U.S./Fil units retreated to Bataan. Weapons were also taken from Japanese troops during raids, and ambushes, or later and in much more limited quantities, brought in via submarines, sent by HQ USAFFE. The weapons that the Philippine Army had

²⁶⁰ McRaven, *Spec Ops*, 271.

²⁶¹ McRaven, *Spec Ops*, 245–283.

²⁶² Dr. John Arquilla (Chairman, Department of Defense Analysis, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School), in discussion with the authors, August 2011.

been armed with prior to the start of the war were America's World War I surplus, including obsolete Enfield rifles.²⁶³ Many other weapons came from the colonial wars, and still made it into the hands of Filipino guerrillas. Americans did bring some weapons with them into the guerrilla lines, but these again only included limited numbers of small arms, including M1 Garand rifles and .45 caliber Colt 1911 pistols.²⁶⁴ One of the first concerns and duties of the guerrilla was to try and find more weapons. One of the principle methods was battlefield recovery—scrounging weapons which had been lost or left behind.²⁶⁵ Weapons were also routinely taken from Japanese soldiers after raids or ambushes. Lack of resources required the guerrilla to be resourceful with what he had. One example of this was in the case of Lieutenant Camp of the CAF, who before one raid made sixty homemade grenades consisting of dynamite, scrap metal, and bamboo.²⁶⁶ When Camp's raid force hit the airfield, they managed to knock out two machine gun positions with the homemade grenades. This action got the assaulters through the perimeter, where they then inflicted heavy losses on the Japanese defenders.²⁶⁷ Some groups had no artillery, mortar, rifle grenades, mines, or explosives, so they had to improvise. Blowing up bridges meant having to wire 30-second fuses to 75mm shells; this turned out to be only moderately successful, but ironically, can be seen as a precursor to modern day IEDs.²⁶⁸ By 1944, the guerrillas had a new method of resupply: a few USAFFE submarines began to make it through to the coast and linkup with the guerrillas. This was a tricky maneuver, which required much secrecy, bamboo rafts, and coded light signals—but when they got through, the guerrillas received weapons, food, money, medicine, intelligence, information, cigarettes, radios, and technically trained men in communications, demolitions, medicine, and weather. These were the “boom times” for the guerrillas. The new weapons raised moral and were a sign that the tide had turned and that the liberation was on the horizon. One anecdote describes

²⁶³ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 253.

²⁶⁴ Norling, *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon*, 21.

²⁶⁵ Norling, *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon*, 40.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 57–58.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 58–59.

²⁶⁸ Hunt and Norling, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 173–174.

the guerrillas getting their hands on new bazookas: “a bazooka was fired accidentally, the destructive force of the shell made an indelible impression on everyone nearby. At once, my men begged me to let them take it down into the lowlands, and try it out against a Kempeitai (Japanese military police) outpost. After an argument, I relented. They dashed off, jubilant as six-year-olds at a birthday party. The bazooka was a tremendous success: those in the Japanese outpost never knew what hit them. There were no known survivors.”²⁶⁹

One of the critical components that the submarines delivered was radios.²⁷⁰ Radios were critical lifelines to the outside. Receiver sets and transmitter sets were common, but very few had receiver-transmitter combos that could be used to communicate. Generally, messages went in one direction. Major Praeger of the CAF had the only receiver transmitter on Luzon, which belonged to the guerrillas, from 1942 until he was captured in 1943.²⁷¹ The CAF radio was considered the most important piece of their organization.²⁷² Without it, there would be no contact with the HQ USAFFE at all. Everything was done to protect it and keep it running. In the end, nothing could stop the Japanese from hunting it down.²⁷³ Men in Volckmann’s unit scrounged the second most important radio in August of 1944; this was an instrumental success because it enabled coordination between the largest guerrilla unit on Luzon and Gen MacArthur in charge of the liberation.

Medicine was in extremely short supply from the beginning of the war and throughout. Hospital facilities also were in critically short supply. The guerrillas were not the only ones to suffer either—all civilians paid a heavy price for the lack of medicine. Jungle disease was rampant, malaria and dengue ravaged the population. Starvation diseases were also very prevalent, beriberi and scurvy took a massive toll on the entire population. Food was very limited, and without medicine to compensate, many people wasted away. Guerrillas and the population tried to improvise remedies, with jungle

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 176.

²⁷⁰ Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 123.

²⁷¹ Norling, *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon*, 79.

²⁷² Ibid., 181.

²⁷³ Ibid., 199.

plants, and local spiritual leaders—however, as expected these often only had moderate results.²⁷⁴ No western fighter was immune to the awfulness of disease. Every known American guerrilla leader was afflicted at one time or another with jungle disease that knocked them down so badly that they expected they would not survive. Often the only reason that they did survive was that a member of the Filipino population brought them in and nursed them back to health.

There was limited transportation available to be used by the guerrillas throughout the entire war. Local vehicles, horse, caribou, and feet were the primary method of transport. Trucks and vehicles were used, but these were all civilian vehicles, which had existed locally prior to the war. One interesting example of “making do with what you have” is the story of how 45 carabao carts were used to move the 512 POWs liberated from the prison camp at Cabanatuan. These prisoners were weak and had a great distance to travel from the camp to safety. The Rangers and guerrillas were able to walk the twenty miles to the camp, but there would be no way the prisoners could walk out back to U.S. lines. There were no vehicles available, so the guerrillas improvised. They coordinated with the local Filipinos who provided and drove the carts—without which, it would have been impossible to get the prisoners out.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴ Norling, *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon*, 137–139.

²⁷⁵ McRaven, *Spec Ops*, 271–272.

F. ANALYSIS / CONCLUSION

WWII JAPANESE OCCUPATION WARFARE	
Force	Filipino-American Guerrillas
Small Units	X
Comparatively Under Resourced	X
Irregular Tactics / Doctrine	X
Terrorism	
Leveraging existing Technology	X
Protracted Conflict	X
Attrition Objectives	X

Figure 6. WWII Japanese Occupation Filipino irregular warfare characteristics

The Japanese occupation was certainly the worst five years in the entire history of the Filipino people. The overwhelming amount of destruction and death is hard to imagine. No person was unaffected. Simultaneously, the period produced some of the greatest examples of Filipino ingenuity, imagination, and irregular fighting spirit. Certainly, the Filipino was under resourced, before and during the campaign. They could not directly challenge the Japanese occupiers and hope to overthrow or annihilate them. Therefore, their only choice was to turn to irregular warfare. The Filipino did just this. They looked to their roots, their tribal DNA. They remembered the hard lessons they had learned from fighting their Spanish and American occupiers and they took the next step. The Filipino guerrilla campaign against the Japanese is an unbelievable study in adaption and whole-of-population effort. It is no less tragic than it is great; however, the campaign clearly shows how brutally violent and destructive irregular warfare is. The campaign was successful; ultimately, the Japanese could not consolidate their gains, and eventually they were expelled, as they could not defend against the liberation invasion.

This period is possibly the clearest example of irregular warfare in Filipino history. First, it is classic in its makeup: a hated foreign occupier, and a popular insurgent movement working towards legitimate freedom and independence. There were multiple bands, well-trained individuals, and external support from the Allied powers. We have seen how the guerrillas organized in small bands, used guerrilla and insurgent tactics, leveraged the technology and weapons available, and worked to prolong the conflict and attrite the Japanese until outside resources were built up for the liberation.

Terrorism is not considered present during this time period, even though some would argue that the guerrillas did terrorize. We have not considered it because the Japanese were foreign occupiers, and any attack on them by a Filipino would be considered a legitimate military attack. Attacks against Filipino collaborators would be considered legitimate for the same reason. It would be taken as a serious accusation to consider the World War II Filipino guerrillas as terrorists. Many of their tactics may have spread fear, but they can be considered lawful violence against military targets.

In conclusion, the Filipino organization, doctrine, and use of technology during the guerrilla campaign is the epitome of irregular warfare. We have seen how limited resources forced the Filipinos to band together for survival. They then went on the offensive against the Japanese—however, again because of their limited resources, they chose to fight a protracted campaign to attrite the Japanese. The Filipino warrior would take this experience and carry it with him for many years. Unfortunately, he would next use these skills and this strategy against his own family.

VI. POST INDEPENDENCE ERA WARFARE

A. INTRODUCTION

The post-independence period covered the next fifty years, from the time the Philippines gained its independence in 1946 to just before the onset of the Philippine-U.S. Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) in 2000. Throughout this period, the Philippines would continue to face security challenges as it struggled to develop as a sovereign nation. The nation's immediate concern was not from foreign invaders but from threats made by internal groups. Conflicts, which became lingering and more complex, were now between Filipinos. In contrast to the colonial period, the nation's armed forces now possessed significant military strength and capability, and faced internal threats that were deemed weak and lacking the military capability and resources to directly overthrow the government. Many of these same internal threats continue to persist even to the present day, continuing to disturb peace and stability, and hindering the country's potential for growth.

Throughout this period, the continued economic and military support of the U.S. government was very apparent. This was made possible by the relationship the Philippines and the U.S. developed over time. More so, though it achieved independence, the Philippine government did not have the wherewithal to rebuild the country and had no recourse but to rely on American benevolence. The continued U.S. presence in the Philippines, through their military bases, was vital to their national interest.²⁷⁶ Both countries saw benefits in this continued relationship. Thus, particularly on matters of security, the Philippines continued to be supported by the U.S. This was manifest in a series of military agreements. In 1947, the Philippines and the U.S. signed two agreements: the Philippine-American Military Bases Agreement (MBA) and the Philippine-American Military Assistance Agreement (MAA). The MBA gave the U.S. access to military bases in the Philippines, notably the Clark Air Base and the Subic Naval Base. The MAA, meanwhile, provided for the transfer of U.S. military surplus

²⁷⁶ William Chapman, *Inside the Philippine Revolution*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 23–24.

equipment to the Philippines and the establishment of a Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG) to advise and train the AFP. The two agreements were followed by the Mutual Defense Treaty, signed by the two countries on 30 August 1951, defining the collective security for both countries. However, the termination of the MBA in September 1991, briefly led to a low point in Philippine-U.S. security relations. Eventually, this relationship was revitalized with the signing of the 1999 Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and the subsequent 2002 Mutual Logistic Support Agreement. In sum, a long history of security relations between the Philippines and the U.S. underscores a U.S. influence over the Philippine military. This U.S. influence is very evident in how the Philippine military was organized, trained, equipped—and arguably—how it fought its conflicts.

From the time the Philippines gained its independence, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) was confronted, over time, with various threats made by internal groups: the HUKBALAHAP or the Huks, the Maoist-inspired Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army (CPP/NPA), and the Muslim secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Certain characteristics are common among these threat groups. First, each of these groups started out small and managed to grow to a level where it effectively challenged the government. Second, these groups were able to grow by recognizing the role the population played in their struggles.

This chapter will focus on how these threat groups challenged the government, and correspondingly, how the AFP dealt with the challenges. For each threat group, an analysis will be made on the nature and capability of each group in pursuing its goals. Particular attention will be given to how each group waged war against the AFP and how the AFP responded to the groups in terms of its organization, tactics/doctrine/strategy, and use of weapons/technology. Throughout the period, Arquilla's definition of irregular warfare, both for the insurgents and the counter-insurgents, is evident—the employment of small units and the use of guerrilla tactics. The insurgents' use of terrorism to influence the behavior of the Philippine government emerges during this period.

B. THE HUKBALAHAP CONFLICT

1. Situation

The liberation of the Philippines from the Japanese occupation and the subsequent end of World War II brought new hope for the Filipinos. It signaled that total independence as a nation would soon be granted by the Americans. True to the spirit of the Tydings-McDuffie Act, Philippine independence was proclaimed on 4 July 1946, with Roxas as President of the Republic.²⁷⁷ The proclamation of Philippine independence ushered in a new era. However, along with hope came the enormous challenges faced by the Filipinos—who were now responsible for managing their own affairs as a sovereign nation. Coming out of the ravages wrought by World War II, the country had to deal with a myriad of problems: a devastated economy, acute food shortage, poverty, the collaboration issue, the issue of guerrilla abuses during the war, and establishing peace and order all over the archipelago. Indeed, a daunting task lay ahead for the government to rehabilitate and reconstruct the country.

While undergoing rehabilitation and reconstruction, of equal concern was the problem of maintaining the nation's internal security. Just out of World War II, there were a lot of firearms available as well as armed groups that threatened peace and order. This was the primordial concern of the Philippine armed forces. The most prominent of these armed groups was the HUKBALAHAP, an acronym for Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon (People's Anti-Japanese Army).²⁷⁸ Commonly known as the Huks, the group's roots go all the way back to the period before World War II. Briefly, the Huks were a peasant-based organization borne out of the growing agrarian unrest prevailing in Central Luzon. The unrest was a result of the exploitative landlord-tenant relationship. Property owners exacted 50–70 percent of the tenants' crop as rent and interest payment.²⁷⁹ Tenants were left with little produce to live on and therefore were incapable of improving

²⁷⁷ Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, 387–389.

²⁷⁸ Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 67.

²⁷⁹ Lawrence M. Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection: A Case Study of a Successful Anti-Surgency Operation in the Philippines, 1946–1955* (Washington, D.C: Analysis Center of Military History, 1987), 7.

their already impoverished situation. As such, tenants continued to be indebted to their landlords with no better future in sight. From these tenants came the rise of peasant groups demanding fairness from the landlords and action from the government. The Huks were built upon these peasant groups during the period of the Japanese invasion of the Philippines. It was clear that the Huks, though they gained prominence as a guerrilla unit during the Japanese invasion, were borne out of the agrarian unrest in Central Luzon. Not even their association with the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) or the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) prior to World War II could discount the fact that the existence of the Huks was rooted in the country's socio-economic problems.

The Huks came out of the World War II as the most organized and strongest of the guerrilla organizations—some 15,000 armed fighters in number, and capable of threatening the post-war Philippine government.²⁸⁰ After the war, there was a need to recognize the contribution of guerrilla units who fought against the Japanese. However, despite their role as anti-Japanese guerrillas in World War II, the Philippine government and the U.S. did not duly recognize the Huks. They were viewed with suspicion due to their communist inclinations. From their many squadrons, only two from southern Luzon were offered official recognition and promised veteran benefits, back pay, and the opportunity for integration into the Philippine armed forces.²⁸¹ The rest of the Huks were ordered disarmed. The treatment resulted in the Huks' disaffection towards the Philippine government and the U.S. forces. The Huks, thereafter, vowed to continue to fight the Philippine government and the U.S., and to pursue their goals rooted in the abusive landlord-tenant relationship.

In the 1946 elections, a requisite for the granting of Philippine independence, Luis Taruc, the Huk Supremo, and six others, all running under the Democratic Alliance (DA) party, ran for seats in Congress in their respective provinces. Six DA candidates, including Taruc, won their Congressional seats representing the provinces of Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, and Tarlac. However, Roxas, who was elected as president, made true on his previous promise of eliminating the Huk resistance. Roxas used his

²⁸⁰ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 15–16.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

influence in Congress to deny the DA candidates their Congressional seats.²⁸² Denied of his seat as a duly-elected Congressman of his province, Taruc decided to return to the mountains and reorganized the Huk resistance movement.

Meanwhile, the AFP had been reorganized at the end of World War II. From its strength of about 132,000, it was immediately reduced to about 25,000.²⁸³ At that time, the Philippine armed force was generally poorly trained and equipped, and lacking the leadership necessary to perform its mission.²⁸⁴ Other problems further compounded the situation of the Philippine military: poor discipline, graft and corruption, ineptitude, low morale, and lack of a clear direction characterized the military organization.²⁸⁵ Given the sad state of the Philippine military, it was not surprising that the military committed atrocities against the population as it addressed the Huk resistance. Thus, the population, particularly in areas influenced by the Huks, was alienated from the AFP as well as from the Philippine government.

The existing conditions in the country from 1945–1946 made the Philippines ripe for a rebellion. The Philippine government, still reeling from the effects of World War II, was unresponsive to the needs of the people. The Philippine military was likewise incapable of addressing the problems of internal security. The people, most especially, bore the brunt of the sufferings caused by the inability of the government and the military to provide for and protect them. It was as a result of these conditions that the Huk rebellion managed to flourish—until its eventual demise in 1955.

2. Organization

a. Huks

Japanese invasion of the Philippines in December 1941, provided an opportunity for the Huks to expand their organization. As the Japanese forces and Filipino collaborators committed atrocities, they drove the population to join the Huks

²⁸² Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 43–44.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 66–67.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ Robert Ross Smith, *The Hukbalahap Insurgency: Economic, Political, and Military Factors* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1963), 101–103.

and fight the invaders. From an early strength of less than 300 individuals in April 1942, the Huks exceeded 10,000 individuals near the end of the war.²⁸⁶ As pointed out earlier, the Huks were the most organized and strongest guerrilla organization after the war.

The Huk organization was composed of fighters, supporters and a mass base.²⁸⁷ The fighters were full-time regulars who conducted the raids, “ambuscades,” kidnappings and extortion. The supporters were those who acted as couriers, collected taxes, or from time to time joined the regulars. The mass base was the largest group among the Huk organization, serving as the lifeline of the movement—providing food, information and sanctuary to the guerrillas.

Looking at the organization, the following chart shows the Huk organizational structure:

²⁸⁶ Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion : A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*, 87–88

²⁸⁷ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection : A Case Study of a Successful Anti-Surgency Operation in the Philippines, 1946–1955*, 46

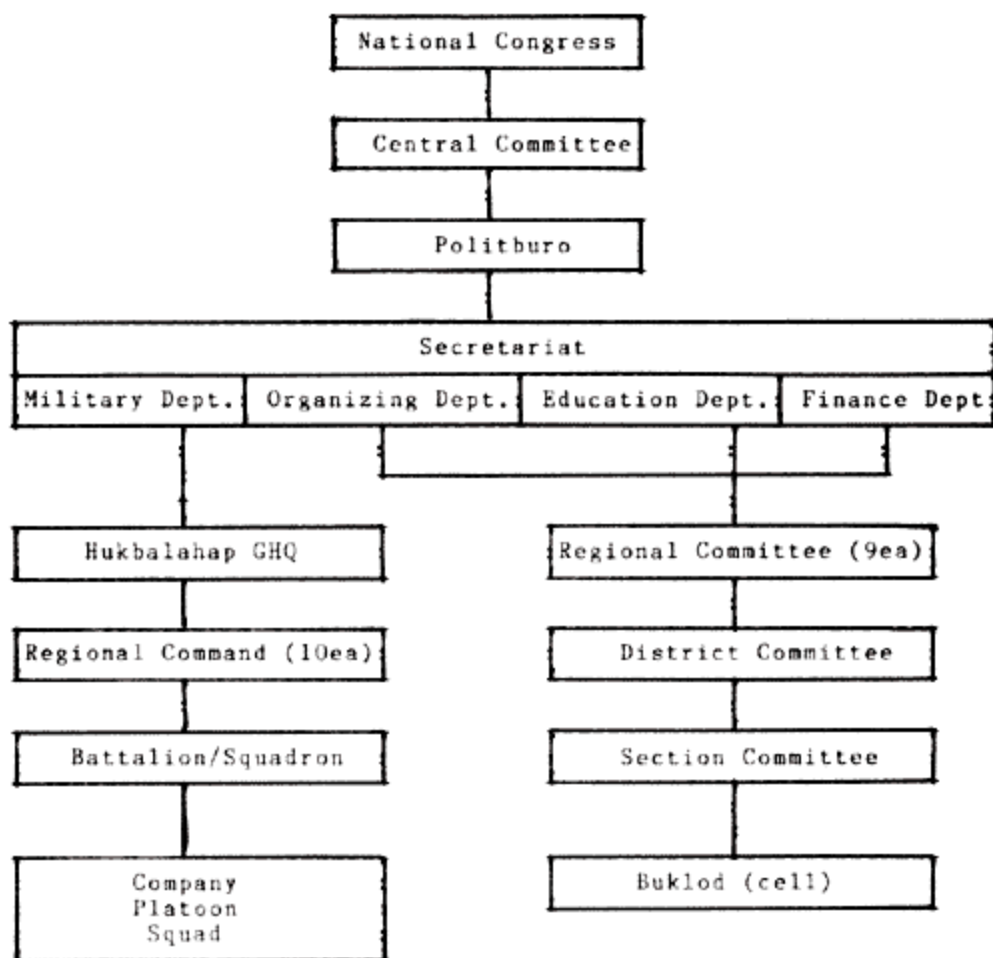


Figure 7. CPP/HUK Organization (ca. 1950) ²⁸⁸

The structure shows the integration of the military side of the Huks and the political side of the PKP/CPP. More so, the organizational structure reflects its hierarchical/centralized nature. The Philippine military would take advantage of the inherent weakness of this type of organization in guerrilla warfare. In October 1950, reflecting great intelligence work, the Philippine military's intelligence units raided twenty-two homes and apartments in Manila.²⁸⁹ This raid resulted in the capture of almost the entire leadership of the Huk/CPP. The raid likewise captured documents of high intelligence value that aided the Philippine military in further efforts of decimating

²⁸⁸ Donald cited in Greenberg, 49.

²⁸⁹ Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 218.

the Huk resistance movement. The capture of these important leaders was a big blow to the Huk/CPP organization from which it never recovered.²⁹⁰

The chart above also shows the structure of the military side of the Huk/CPP. A regional command was composed of a regiment made up of two battalions (of two squadrons each); the squadron (company) was composed of 100 men, and was nominally composed of two platoons, each platoon having four 12-man squads.²⁹¹ The structure is evidence of the use of small units, the squad as its basic organization, to carry out the Huks' operations.

b. AFP

The AFP, in order to effectively confront the Huk problem, also required some reorganization. The reorganization took a serious pace during the tenure of Magsaysay as Secretary of National Defense. While the reorganization encompassed a lot of areas for improvement in the military, emphasis here is given to the frontline units tasked to address the Huk insurgents at the tactical level—the Battalion Combat Team (BCT). The following chart shows the structure of the BCT:

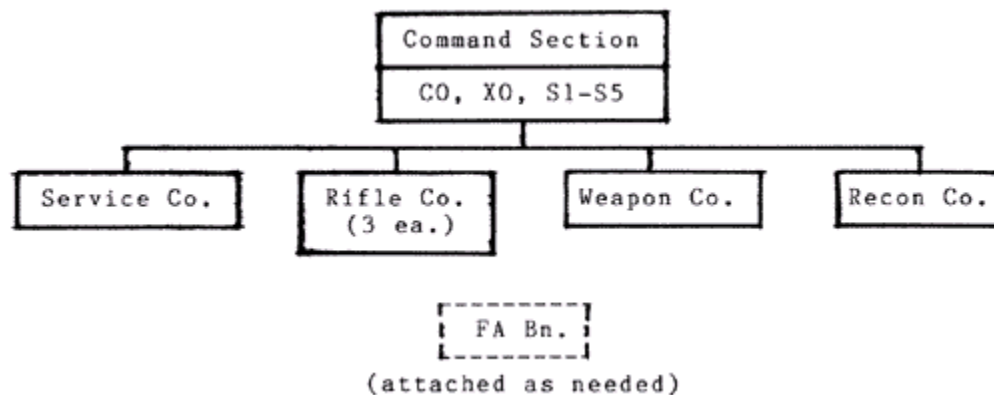


Figure 8. AFP Battalion Combat Team Organization (ca. 1952)²⁹²

The BCT was organized to address the operational requirements for combating the Huk insurgency. Primary considerations in the organization of the BCT

²⁹⁰ Smith, *The Hukbalahap Insurgency*, 105–107.

²⁹¹ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 48–49.

²⁹² Smith cited in Greenberg, 114.

were mobility, firepower, and the emphasis given to small unit operations. To increase its mobility, the battalion was stripped of its artillery and heavy mortars, and was replaced with additional rifle companies. Likewise, light utility vehicles were provided down to the platoon level. In terms of firepower, 81mm mortars and 75mm recoilless rifles were issued to the weapons company. For heavier fire support, artillery was attached to the BCT for specific operations, as needed. At the heart of the BCT were the rifle companies. Each company was composed of approximately 200 men and divided into four rifle platoons; a service platoon with intelligence analysts, maintenance, civil affairs, and medical sections; and a company headquarters. Each rifle platoon was assigned with four light utility vehicles, one 2 ½ ton truck, two .50 caliber machine guns and one 60mm mortar. Platoons were made up of three squads, each squad composed of two patrols. Each patrol, typically, was composed of an enlisted patrol leader, a radioman, a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) man, a scout, a rifleman/grenadier, and an aidman/cook. Provided with the necessary support to accomplish its mission, the BCT was considered a self-contained combat unit.²⁹³

The emphasis given to small-unit operations also saw the birth of the Scout Ranger (SR) team. Combining the reconnaissance capabilities of the U.S. Army's Alamo Scouts and the strike capabilities of the U.S. Army Rangers, the then-Captain Rafael Ileto, who had served with the U.S. Army's Alamo Scouts in World War II, came up with the concept of the SR team. Thus, on 25 November 1950, the Scout Ranger Training Unit (SRTU) was created to train Scout Rangers. The basic SR unit was a 7-man team capable of infiltrating enemy territory, conducting long-range reconnaissance, and—when given the opportunity—strike the enemy and quickly withdraw. The SR team capitalized on stealth, mobility, and strike capabilities to attack enemy guerrilla units that were often larger in number than the SR teams. Initially, the SR teams were assigned to regular infantry battalions for reconnaissance and strike missions. By 1954, all SR teams were combined to form a single unit, the First Scout Ranger Regiment (FSRR). At the end of major hostilities with the Huks in 1957, the FSRR was deactivated, and the SR training course was incorporated into the Philippine Army's infantry school. The unit,

²⁹³ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 397.

having displayed its utility in counter-insurgency operations, would again rise to the challenge to combat the threat posed by the communist insurgency in the 1970s.

3. Tactics / Doctrine

a. Huks

The Huks employed raids and ambushes as their principal tactics. They normally operated in small units, but could come together to form a larger force, depending on the mission/target. Raids were conducted against poorly defended or isolated military camps or outposts. These raids would net for the Huks additional weapons and other war materials for the resistance movement. Raids would likewise be conducted in towns or villages to liquidate government officials, ransack for food and other supplies, or to intimidate the population in areas not supportive to the movement. It had become common practice for the Huks to conduct raids that were timed during the eve, or on the day, of town fiestas or holidays—when the general celebratory mood of the people would tend to relax the security measures of the military and the police.²⁹⁴ Raids would normally be timed at the break of dawn, or in some instances, just before twilight, especially on isolated military outposts where the arrival of reinforcements or outside help would be delayed by the onset of darkness.

Ambush was also a common tactic of the Huks. Ambushes were set along roads or trails that were usual routes of government forces while taking advantage of the terrain that would provide the Huks cover and concealment. Ambushes were not limited to government forces but also to government officials or other civilians, landlords in particular, that were considered unsympathetic to the movement. The Huks became a master of the hit-and-run technique, which was used to avoid major clashes with the government forces, to wear out the government forces conducting pursuit operations, and for practical purposes of survival so they could fight another day.

The Huks were also noted for using terrorism as a tactic; they would “liquidate” civilians that opposed them. One particular incident outraged the

²⁹⁴ Smith, *The Hukbalahap Insurgency*, 92.

public and was denounced as excessive. In April 1949, the Huks killed Mrs. Quezon (the widow of the former President Manuel L. Quezon) and others in her car.²⁹⁵ Reasons were given in an attempt to explain the use of terrorism: that it was retaliation against government terrorism, which had forced them to do bad things, or that Huks who carried out terrorism were bad cadres with poor leadership control. Yet, the killing of the wife of a former president was considered inappropriate, and did not support the movement's cause, even for those inside the movement.²⁹⁶ Whatever the explanations, the use of terrorism worked against the resistance movement.

Throughout the resistance period, the Huks effectively used the population to their advantage. Having the support of the population, particularly in Central Luzon where Huk supporters and sympathizers were at their highest, enabled the resistance movement to flourish. Consistent with Gordon McCormick's "Diamond Model," the population was the source of food, money, members, and information for the Huks.

b. AFP

The reorganization of the AFP, and particularly the creation of the BCT and SR team units, showed evidence of a shift from the more conventional, large-formation operations to an emphasis on the use of small unit operations. There were compelling reasons for these: the AFP had to keep up with the ability of the Huks to evade government forces and avoid major clashes; the AFP had to be able to conduct pursuit operations effectively; and the AFP had to be able to operate in Huklandia without compromising their presence. The use of small units capable of conducting small unit tactics was the key to combating the Huks. The government already had the advantage in terms of firepower, logistics, and mobility. What was needed was to be able to effectively engage the enemy and bring these advantages to bear upon them.

Aside from the preponderance of small unit operations, the AFP also experimented with the conduct of pseudo-operations. The idea was to use specially-trained soldiers to pose as Huks, infiltrate Huk areas, sow confusion, and obtain

²⁹⁵ Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 217.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

intelligence.²⁹⁷ To this end, selected soldiers were trained to adapt to the Huks' manner of dressing, speaking, and eating. The soldiers were exposed to the movement's reading materials and other documents pertaining to the Huks. They were also exposed to, and equipped with, the type of weapons the Huks used. After the training, the soldiers were deployed at a time and area favorable to their cover-up, to make their presence as Huks plausible enough to the enemy. An example of the success of this deception operation was the "Force X" launched by the 16th PC Company, composed of three officers and 44 men under Lieutenant Marana.²⁹⁸ Upon making contact with the enemy, the unit under Lieutenant Marana was able to disguise themselves as valid Huks in the eyes of the enemy for five days. However, on the sixth day, the Huks had already become suspicious of their true identity. With the initiative still on their side, Lieutenant Marana struck the enemy, leading to 82 Huks killed-in-action (KIA) in less than 30 minutes.²⁹⁹ This type of operation was also used to covertly distribute propaganda leaflets in areas thought to be secured by the Huks. The result was confusion and fear among the Huks. Another use for this type of operation was to plant altered ammunition in the Huks' ammunition stockpile.³⁰⁰ Aside from destroying the rifle and injuring the person firing the weapon, this ploy caused confusion in the enemy ranks—a Huk could not be sure whether the ammunition he was using was tampered with, or if somebody in his ranks had become a government infiltrator.

Other factors, throughout the strategic, operational, and tactical levels, can be attributed to the success of the government's operations against the Huks: leadership, better intelligence, improved troop discipline, and respect for human rights, to name a few. However, it cannot be denied that the emphasis on small unit operations enabled the AFP to bring the fight to the enemy.

²⁹⁷ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 414

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 415.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 117.

4. Weapons / Technology

a. Huks

The lack of weapons and ammunition supply was always a concern of the Huk resistance movement. Lacking any external support as well, the Huks had to make do with firearms that were leftovers from World War II. The Huks augmented these with weapons captured from killed soldiers, or from successful raids of military outposts or government and private installations. The Huks fought mostly with rifles, a mix of old Enfield and Springfield rifles, carbines, and .45 caliber Thompson submachine guns. These were supplemented with a few .30 caliber machineguns and small mortars (60mm).³⁰¹

In terms of communications, the Huks did not have the equipment to come up with a communication network of their own. The Huks had to rely on the existing telephone and telegraph systems available at that time.³⁰² They used it either to pass information to fellow Huks, or gather information from the government forces by way of supporters/sympathizers who were employed by communications services. To compensate for their lack of a mechanical means to communicate, the Huks resorted to an elaborate courier system.³⁰³ Utilizing their supporters, the Huks used couriers to pass messages to other units, making use of the transport systems available in the area. While this worked for the Huks for a certain period, the nature of the system certainly did cause delays in the delivery of messages, as well as in the coordination of Huk activities.

Overall, the lack of resources, aside from other considerations, was an obvious factor for the Huk resistance movement. In addition, technological impacts, if any, were mostly absent for the Huks. The Huks had to make do with whatever resources were available, and they tried to compensate for this in other areas of the resistance movement.

³⁰¹ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 55.

³⁰² Smith, *The Hukbalahap Insurgency*, 97.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 97–98.

b. AFP

In stark contrast to the Huks, the AFP, while it also lacked the resources needed to fight the rebellion, enjoyed the backing of the U.S. government. In his 1950 visit to the U.S., Magsaysay was able to secure military aid.³⁰⁴ The U.S. provided weapons, training, and funds to support the anti-Huk campaign.³⁰⁵ Hence, the AFP was able to have considerable advantage over its enemies in terms of resources.

In terms of firepower, AFP units certainly had the advantage. Small units were armed with Browning Automatic Rifles (BAR), Thompson submachine guns, and carbines. (Smith, pp. 120) AFP units also had direct fire support from heavy machineguns (.50 and .30 caliber), and 75mm recoilless rifles; indirect fire support was provided by mortars (60mm and 81mm), and artillery, and air support from Air Force planes.³⁰⁶ AFP units also had the mobility assets to cover wide areas and the radios to maintain communication with other units, and to allow coordination.

In addition to the weapons and equipment already at hand, the Philippine Army Research and Development (R&D) Unit developed some items in contribution to the counter-insurgency effort. Some of these items were exploding radios, flashlights, and doctored Huk weapons that were planted in enemy supplies.³⁰⁷ The R&D Unit also made some innovations: one was the modified M1 carbine, for use of the SR teams, equipped with dual barrels, made fully automatic, and capable of firing 1,500 rounds per minute; another was the homemade napalm bomb, coconut shells filled with gasoline and dropped with incendiary grenades.³⁰⁸

But then, while the AFP had an advantage over the Huks in terms of weapons, equipment, and technology, this particular advantage had to be combined with other efforts in various areas of the AFP military in order to produce the desired impact on the insurgency problem.

³⁰⁴ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 116.

³⁰⁵ Kessler, *Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines*, 34.

³⁰⁶ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 112–115.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 119.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

C. THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE PHILIPPINES / NEW PEOPLES ARMY CONFLICT

1. Situation

The years after the defeat of the Huk rebellion saw relative peace in the country. Yet, socio-economic problems continued to persist. Poverty was still rampant in the country while the elites and the landlords continue to amass their own wealth. While it can be said that the poor could vote, indicating that democracy was progressing, it was still the elites—the big landlords and businessmen—who dictated politics and power.³⁰⁹ The gap between the rich and the poor in society had become wider. The issue of land for the landless remained a problem. Succeeding administrations after Magsaysay failed to carry on with the programs initiated by the late President, particularly the agrarian reform. Meantime, issues on nationalism started to gain momentum in the early 1960s with the students, workers, and peasants. Nationalist issues ranged from the unfair nature of the Philippine-U.S. free-trade agreement to the presence of U.S. bases in the Philippines. Two incidents at the U.S. military bases further fueled these anti-U.S. sentiments.³¹⁰ On 25 November 1964, an off-duty U.S. soldier shot and killed a Filipino boy collecting scrap items inside Clark Air Base. This was followed by another incident where two U.S. naval sentries shot and killed a Filipino fisherman found paddling his boat inside the waters of Subic Naval Base. These incidents resulted in angry demonstrations outside of the U.S. Embassy in Manila.

About the same time, a Cultural Revolution was occurring in China. This development was deemed to have influenced the nationalist movements. Mao's writings provided a concrete plan for organizing an armed revolution. Further, it opened the possibility to the nationalists that there was something that a weak group could do against a more powerful group.³¹¹

³⁰⁹ Chapman, *Inside the Philippine Revolution*, 17–18.

³¹⁰ Gregg R. Jones, *Red Revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerrilla Movement* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 21.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

Amidst these combined factors prevailing in Philippine society, along with the inspiration derived from China's Cultural Revolution, Jose Maria Sison saw that the situation was ripe for revolution. Thus, Sison founded the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). This was followed by the founding of the New People's Army (NPA) under Bernabe Buscayno. The CPP, following Mao's teachings, pursued a protracted people's war. The CPP controlled and gave direction to the revolutionary movement, and the NPA served as the military arm. The birth of the CPP in 26 December 1968—and the subsequent founding of the NPA on 29 March 1969—marked the beginning of a renewed communist insurgency in the Philippines. While the CPP/NPA did have its ups and downs, this threat managed to persist over time and remains the primary internal security threat to the country even to this day.³¹²

The AFP, on the other hand, continued its development as a professional standing force. It gained much needed experience in security operations during its successful role of defeating the Huk rebellion. This was further enhanced with its experience in the international scene through its participation in the Korean War and the Vietnam War. In Korea, it sent a Philippine Expeditionary Force to Korea (PEFTOK) where its BCTs directly participated in combat under the United Nations. In Vietnam, a Philippine Contingent to Vietnam (PHILCONV), later named Philippine Civic Action Group to Vietnam (PHILCAGV), was sent primarily for civic action operations. Throughout the period, the AFP continued to be supported by the U.S. military.

On the domestic scene, the AFP would have its hands full with emerging security challenges, the burgeoning communist insurgency, and for a period, Muslim separatism. On top of it all, disturbing trends were apparent in the AFP.³¹³ The AFP would be hounded by politicization that affected its efforts towards professionalism. Also, factionalism characterized the organization, such as Academy graduates vs. ROTC graduates or “integreees.” Non-traditional roles would also be added to the AFP, such as the management and control of government owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs),

³¹² Internal Peace and Security Plan (IPSP) “Bayanihan”

³¹³ Kessler, *Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines*, 115.

most especially at the onset of Martial Law. This role, particularly for officers, digressed the AFP from performing its core competencies.

In the public's eye, especially the peasants and the poor, the AFP was always viewed as working for the privileged. The AFP was seen as instruments of the elite to repress any challenges—as pawns of the landlords.³¹⁴ This would further intensify during the Martial Law period.

Amidst all these challenges and negativism, the AFP would respond to the challenge, and would certainly learn its lessons as it tried to fulfill its mandate.

2. Organization

a. CPP/NPA

Democratic centralism is the CPP/NPA's basic organizational principle, reflecting centralized leadership and decentralized operations.³¹⁵ At the top of the organization is the Central Committee (CC), providing control and guidance. Under the CC are: the National Democratic Front (NDF) which builds the front organizations; the Territorial Commissions (TC) which cover the six areas of northern, central, and southern Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao, and Negros Island; and four functional commissions (mass movement, propaganda, united front, and military).³¹⁶ Under the TCs are the various levels of committees (regional, front, district, and section) with the corresponding armed units (the main regional guerrilla unit [MRGU], front regional guerrilla unit [FRGU], district local guerrilla unit, and section local guerrilla unit. The MRGU resembles a company-size unit, the FRGU a platoon-size unit, and the district guerrilla and section guerrilla units range from a squad-size to about 3–5 man teams.³¹⁷

At the lowest level, the CPP/NPA operated with 3–5 man teams. These small units conducted a range of activities designed to gain the support of the local

³¹⁴ Kessler, *Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines*, 110.

³¹⁵ Leonardo I. Peña and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Finding the Missing Link to a Successful Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy [Electronic Resource]* (Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2007), 9.

³¹⁶ Kessler, *Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines*, 64.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

populace.³¹⁸ Operating in small units made the CPP/NPA very mobile and hard to detect by government forces, increasing their survivability. On the tactical side, when a target or mission required a larger force, these small units came together to form a larger unit.

b. AFP

Being a professional standing force, the AFP follows the conventional organizational structure. A chain of command enables the AFP to coordinate its efforts and resources to address the CPP/NPA threat. However, learning from the Huk rebellion experience, it had placed primacy in the conduct of small unit operations. In the Army organization, the service that bears the brunt of the counter-insurgency operations, emphasis has been placed upon the strengthening of the squad's capability. The squad continues to be the basic fighting unit of the Army.

On the other hand, it is important to emphasize the innovations adopted by the Army in its counter-insurgency campaign. One innovation is the organization of the Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit or CAFGU. These are indigenous forces organized to augment the Army's need for more personnel for a manpower-intensive counter-insurgency campaign.³¹⁹ Given the scope of the CPP/NPA threat, the Army units become over-extended in the insurgency-affected areas. Hence, the concept of CAFGU is very helpful and cost-efficient in filling this manpower gap. CAFGU members are recruited from the local villages to put up a village defense. Since they are from the areas, these CAFGUs have knowledge of the local terrain and have access to local information. CAFGUs, as they hold the area, allow other Army units to maneuver and clear other affected areas. The CAFGU in a local village may number from a squad to a section in size, and is handled by a cadre (either an SF or Regular Infantry).

Another innovation made by the Army is the Special Operations Team (SOT). The SOT is basically a squad-size unit with the TRIAD capabilities of civil-military operations/intelligence/combat operations (CMO/INTEL/CBT OPN) within

³¹⁸ Victor N. Corpus, *Silent War* (Quezon City, Philippines: VNC Enterprises, 1989), 39.

³¹⁹ Joseph H. Felter and Stanford University. The Department of Political Science. The Committee on Graduate Studies. Thesis, *Taking Guns to a Knife Fight : A Case for Empirical Study of Counterinsurgency; a Dissertation*, 43–44.

the squad.³²⁰ What make the SOT different from the regular infantry squads is the equal importance and capability it gives to CMO and INTEL, and not purely CBT OPN. The Army infantry companies, at the start of this new approach, developed at least one SOT in their organization. Later, the Army developed more SOTs, given their success in the field.

3. Tactics / Doctrine

a. CPP/NPA

At the strategic level, the CPP/NPA combines the armed and legal struggle to fight the Philippine government. The armed struggle adapts the strategy of protracted people's war.³²¹ The strategy calls for the creation of guerrilla bases in the countryside from where the revolution can move towards the urban centers and to the encircling of the cities. It covers three strategic stages: the strategic defensive, the strategic stalemate, and the strategic offensive. On the legal struggle, the strategy is to build united fronts and mass movements to isolate the government forces both politically and psychologically.³²² This means operating within the legal framework to infiltrate legitimate organizations in the society. The legal struggle also includes participating in elections, peace negotiations and efforts for international recognition.

At the operational/tactical level, it is where the CPP/NPA does its organizational work and military activities. At the organizational side, the process starts with the arrival of a few cadres in a barangay. These cadres would conduct a social investigation to assess the situation in the barangay. This was followed by mass works with the purpose of gaining the people's support. The people would then be organized in various committees (e.g. women, youth, farmers, fishermen) until such time that the barangay already established their own shadow government. This process would be repeated in other barangays until it expands to a mass base. From these mass bases is

³²⁰ Corpus, *Silent War*, 144.

³²¹ Ibid., 25.

³²² Peña and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Finding the Missing Link to a Successful Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy [Electronic Resource]*, 12.

where the CPP/NPA gets its recruits, information and other resources to further its campaign.

On military activities, the CPP/NPA is a master of guerrilla warfare. Raids and ambushes are its bread-and-butter tactics in order to confront a much larger enemy force vis-à-vis its smaller force. It utilizes its knowledge of the terrain to offset any advantages that the enemy has. In as much as the insurgents are lacking in weapons, one tactic it employs is the *agaw-armas* (arms seizure).³²³ Insurgents pry on isolated, unsuspecting government forces or even pro-government individuals to kill them and grab their firearms. The *agaw-armas*, raids and ambushes are the primary activities of the CPP/NPA in increasing its arsenal.

On the other hand, the CPP/NPA generally has not taken sabotage as a tactic on a more extensive scale, the reason being that sabotage is a double-edged sword.³²⁴ Corpuz pointed out that if used indiscriminately, sabotage can possibly incur the ire of the people and consequently alienate them from the movement. An example to this was the blowing up of bridges in the Bicol Region in 1987 which greatly inconvenienced the people.³²⁵ At a more controversial level, the Plaza Miranda bombing on 21 August 1971 lent credence to Corpuz's point. A rally by the Liberal Party, staunch critics of Marcos, was held that night. During the rally, three grenades were tossed into the stage that killed nine people and injuring more than 100. In what may be considered the onset of modern terrorism, the incident sparked outrage in the country and the blame was easily placed on Marcos. Unknown to the public, it was the CPP/NPA who was responsible for the act of terrorism. The CPP/NPA intended that the incident would create the spark needed to sweep the revolution into high gear.³²⁶ The incident elicited further repression from the government side, as predicted by Sison. But while the incident may have boosted the communists' cause, it would continue to haunt and create schism within the CPP leadership years after its occurrence. No incidents of similar nature occurred

³²³ Corpuz, *Silent War*, 44.

³²⁴ Ibid., 105.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Jones, *Red Revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerrilla Movement*, 61.

after the Plaza Miranda bombing, underscoring the communists' reluctance to use terrorism in the pursuit of its goals.³²⁷

b. AFP

The AFP, over time, has likewise adjusted to the operational /tactical requirements in the field—the emphasis for small unit operations. Only by enhancing its capability to employ small unit tactics can it effectively engage the very mobile guerrilla units. AFP units have departed from the large-formation sweeping operations to the more deliberate, intelligence-driven operations employing sufficient force.

The SOT concept, likewise, gave the AFP much success in reducing the CPP/NPA's mass base in the countryside. Combining CMO, INTEL, and CBT OPN capabilities, the SOT dismantled the political structure at the barangay level. It was an anti-thesis to the CPP/NPA's ideological, political, and organizational (IPO) works. Simply, it was the AFP giving the CPP/NPA a dose of its own medicine.

While the bulk of the counter-insurgency campaign was at the tactical level, the AFP has made adjustments at the operational and strategic level in order to support the efforts at the tactical level with various campaign plans. The first was the OPLAN KATATAGAN (OPLAN STABILITY) during the Marcos regime.³²⁸ It was a copycat of Magsaysay's campaign during the Huk rebellion; this plan, however, failed to achieve success. It was followed by another failure, OPLAN MAMAMAYAN (OPLAN PEOPLE). Then the LAMBAT-BITAG (DRAGNET) CAMPAIGN PLAN came into being. The plan was an integration of CMO, INTEL, and CBT OPN and the tactics of CLEAR, HOLD, CONSOLIDATE, and DEVELOP.³²⁹ This was where the SOT concept was introduced and widely implemented, along with the employment of CAFGUs. The other facet of the campaign plan was the involvement of civilian government agencies and non-government organizations (NGO). The LAMBAT BITAG was the campaign

³²⁷ Jones, *Red Revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerrilla Movement*, 69.

³²⁸ Magno cited in Peña and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Finding the Missing Link to a Successful Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy* [Electronic Resource], 42.

³²⁹ Devesa cited in Peña and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Finding the Missing Link to a Successful Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy* [Electronic Resource], 43.

plan that led to the decline of the CPP/NPA.³³⁰ It underscored the whole-of-government approach, that insurgency cannot be solved through military means alone. As conditions on the ground change, other campaign plans were developed, all built on the gains of LAMBAT BITAG's success.

4. Weapons / Technology

a. CPP/NPA

It may appear comical, but in reality, it can be said that whatever weapons the AFP has, the CPP/NPA also has—though limited only to small arms and some high-caliber weapons. This is because the AFP is the primary source of weapons for the insurgents, weapons gained from successful engagements with government forces or from raids of government and private installations.

Recognizing the lack of weapons needed to further their armed struggle, the CPP/NPA established ties with China for the supply of weapons. The CPP/NPA sent a delegation to China—called the 'China project'—for the purpose of securing weapons aid.³³¹ The China project was able to secure weapons for the movement twice, as evidenced by the *M/V Karagatan* and *M/V Andrea* incidents. However, both shipments of weapons became fiascos for the CPP/NPA. The *M/V Karagatan* was discovered by the AFP in a timely manner—during the unloading of weapons at Digoyo Point along the coast of Isabela. Of the 1,200 M-14 rifles shipped, the communists were only able to salvage about 200 rifles, a few thousand rounds of ammunition, and a few rocket launchers.³³² On the other hand, the *M/V Andrea* failed to even reach the coast of the Philippines as it ran aground on coral reefs while enroute.³³³ After these botched shipments, there were no other known incidents of foreign entities supplying weapons to the CPP/NPA.

³³⁰ Hernandez cited in Peña and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Finding the Missing Link to a Successful Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy [Electronic Resource]*, 44.

³³¹ Jones, *Red Revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerrilla Movement*, 72–73.

³³² *Ibid.*, 52.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 79.

The CPP/NPA had to contend itself with self-reliance by continuing to source its weapons internally. What it lacked in weapons had to be off-set with guerrilla tactics and better knowledge of the terrain.

b. AFP

The AFP, meanwhile, continued to benefit from the aid provided by the Americans. Not only did it have the small arms and other high-caliber weapons, it also had the advantage of artillery support and air-to-ground support. Aside from the weapons, the AFP also had the advantage of technologically advanced products and gadgets. The AFP was able to obtain secured radios, global positioning systems (GPS), night vision goggles (NVG), and sniper rifles to enhance its combat effectiveness.

In terms of combat and combat service support, the AFP was able to acquire better air-to-ground aircrafts (e.g., MG-520 attack helicopters) and mobility assets (e.g., SIMBA armored fighting vehicles, HMMWV or Humvees). With newer technology, the individual soldier was also supplied with better, more durable and more comfortable combat clothing and individual equipment (CCIEs).

Yet, despite its marked advantages in weapons and technology, the AFP still failed to eradicate the insurgency, further underscoring the fact that defeating insurgencies requires more than weapons and material.

D. THE MORO ISLAMIC LIBERATION FRONT CONFLICT

1. Situation

The Muslim problem in the Southern Philippines can trace its roots from historical and contemporary causes.³³⁴ The Muslim inhabitants began to feel marginalized as Christians began migrating to Mindanao. As the Christians settled, they began to acquire more land. The Muslims on the other hand, oblivious to the processes of

³³⁴ Ricardo C. Morales and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Perpetual War: The Philippine Insurgencies [Electronic Resource]* (Monterey, California; Springfield, VA: Naval Postgraduate School; Available from National Technical Information Service, 2003), 35.

land ownership, found themselves slowly stripped of their land.³³⁵ Over time, the Christians became owners of larger tracts of land compared to the Muslims. This turnout was viewed by the Muslims as Christian encroachment of their territory. The 1960s saw increasing tensions between the Muslim and Christians, marked by some violence.

Apart from the influx of Christians in their territory, the Muslims felt discontented as the government failed to provide adequate basic services to their community.³³⁶ This has long been a grievance of people settled far away from the seat of power; government resources were always focused in the capital Manila and surrounding areas.

However, it was the infamous *Jabidah* massacre which pushed the Muslims to fight against the government. In 1968, a secret plot was uncovered wherein the AFP was training recruits to infiltrate and sow destabilization in the Malaysian state of Sabah. The plot was in relation to the Philippines' claim of Sabah, stemming from the ancestral claim of the Sultan of Sulu. The trainees, all Muslim youths, were summarily executed because of disciplinary problems.³³⁷ But one trainee survived to tell the story.³³⁸ The incident prompted Udtog Matalam, a Cotabato politician, to organize the Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM). Hundreds of MIM members underwent training in Malaysia.³³⁹ This group became the nucleus of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) under Nur Misuari that pursued the struggle for independence. By the latter part of 1972, the MNLF Cotabato Command, alone, had an estimated armed force of 5,000–6,000.³⁴⁰

The years 1973–1976 saw among the heaviest fighting between the AFP and the MNLF forces. On 23 December 1976, the Philippine government and the MNLF signed the Tripoli Agreement. The agreement provided for a ceasefire and the creation of an

³³⁵ Morales and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Perpetual War: The Philippine Insurgencies [Electronic Resource]*, 35–36.

³³⁶ Ricardo A. David et al., *The Causes and Prospect of the Southern Philippines Secessionist Movement* (Monterey, California; Springfield, VA: Naval Postgraduate School; Available from National Technical Information Service, 2003), 4.

³³⁷ Morales and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Perpetual War: The Philippine Insurgencies [Electronic Resource]*, 36.

³³⁸ Vitug and Gloria cited in Morales and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Perpetual War: The Philippine Insurgencies [Electronic Resource]*, 36.

³³⁹ Fortunato U. Abat, *The Day We Nearly Lost Mindanao* (Quezon City: s.n., 1999), xvii.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, xix.

autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao, but one that was subject to the constitutional processes of the Republic of the Philippines. Though peace was far from being attained, the agreement provided the stepping stone for future agreements, as well as for relief from the hardships on both sides caused by the fighting.

Towards the end of 1977, there came a split in the MNLF leadership due to internal differences. Hashim Salamat broke away from the MNLF, and subsequently formed the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 1978. This time the MILF demanded an independent Islamic state. On 2 September 1996, the Philippine government and the MNLF finally signed an historic peace agreement. The MILF was now left continuing the fight for Muslim secessionism. It has managed to grow itself into a formidable armed organization throughout the years, and certainly has enough leverage to keep the government's attention. Peace negotiations have been ongoing between the government and the MILF, yet it has only produced periods of cessation in the hostilities, broken by some intense clashes every now and then.

The AFP, in the meantime, was caught up in two conflicts that it had to address. Given the manpower and the resources available, the AFP could not afford to address both conflicts simultaneously. Throughout this period of multiple conflicts, prioritizing the threat has been the AFP's prudent strategy. Except for an occasional surge in the fighting now and again, the AFP has been able to contain both threats. However, the fact remains that, though it may have contained the threats, the AFP has failed to reduce the insurgencies to a level where they cannot challenge the government effectively. This has been the situation with the AFP and the insurgent groups for more than three decades now. Moreover, continuous occupation with these internal threats has kept the AFP from pursuing its long-needed modernization program. Moreover, the AFP's constitutional mandate remains one that is concerned with external defense, notwithstanding the fact that external threats are remote for the time being.

2. Organization

a. MILF

The MILF, much like the CPP/NPA, follows a hierarchical structure. Leadership emanates from its Central Committee (CC). The CC provides overall control and guidance to the organization. The CC pursues the political struggle, ably supported by its military arm, the Bangsa Moro Islamic Armed Forces.³⁴¹ Its organization is shown in the following chart:

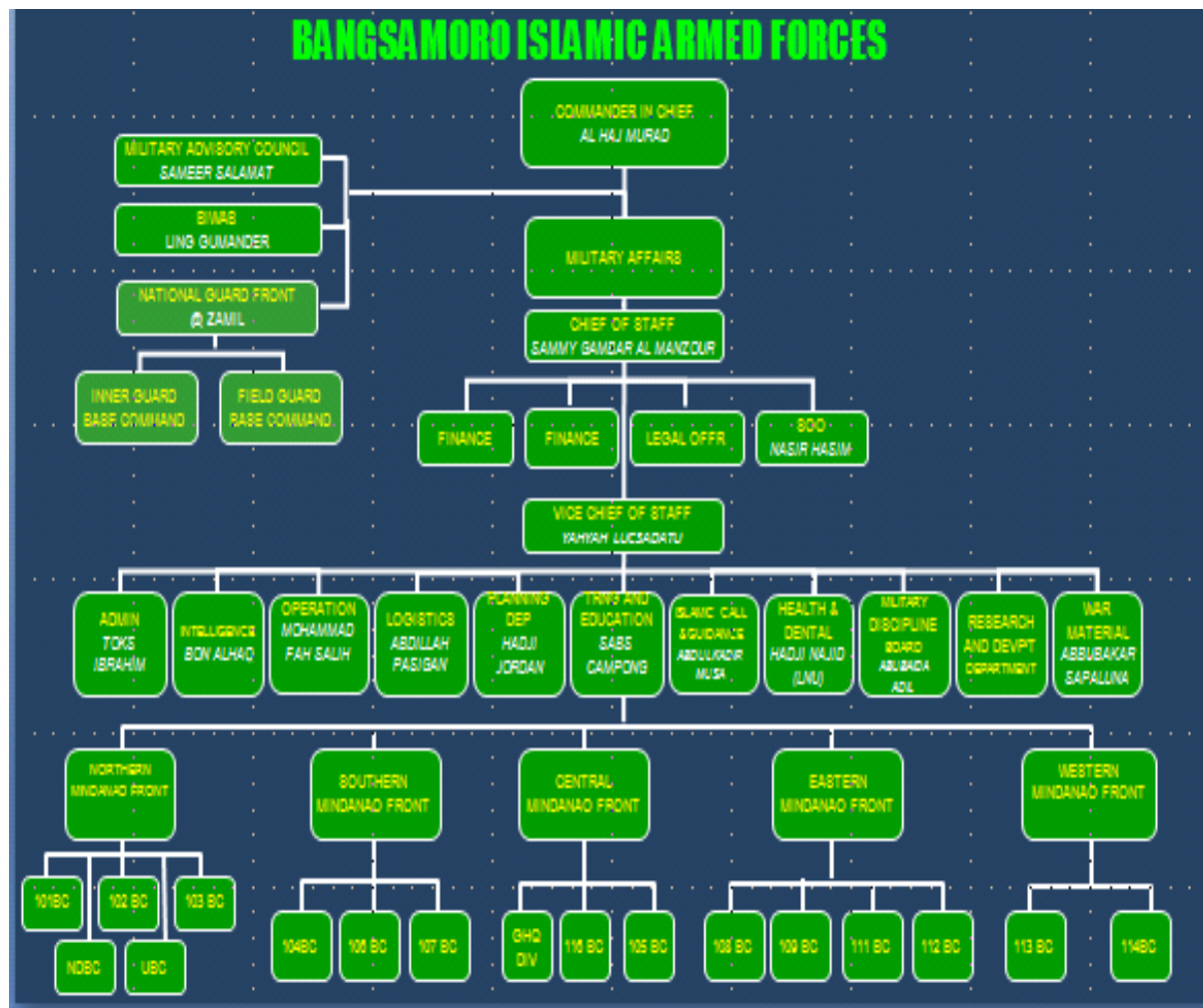


Figure 9. BIAF Organization³⁴²

³⁴¹ G2, Philippine Army Assessment.

³⁴² G2, Philippine Army Assessment.

The BIAF structure reflects the conventional form, resembling the structure of the AFP. Worthy of emphasis here are the base commands comprising the BIAF that are located in various areas of Mindanao. While the structure shows numerous base commands, estimates on the size of units or the number of armed individuals under each varies wildly among the base commands.³⁴³ There is also no fixed account on how these base commands are organized. It can only be assumed that the BIAF are also formed according to brigades, battalions, companies, platoons, and squads. As of 1st Semester 2010 estimates, MILF strength was placed at 10,500 with about 7,500 high-powered firearms, supported by a mass base of 1.2 Million in 1,766 Muslim-populated barangays—or 18% of the 9,962 total barangays in Mindanao.³⁴⁴

The MILF base commands are distributed over 21 major MILF camps in various Muslim-dominated parts of Mindanao.³⁴⁵ Seven of these camps were recognized by the AFP in the General Cessation of Hostilities signed on 18 July 1997.³⁴⁶ MILF forces are able to semi-permanently stay in these camps, which allows the MILF to consolidate and further build up. On the other hand, staying in such camps allows for easy monitoring by the AFP. It works both ways for the contending parties.

b. AFP

Since the Muslim secessionist problem erupted at about the same time that the communist insurgency surged, the AFP's organization reflected the same conventional set-up (as described in the section on the communist insurgency). The creation of CAFGUs has also similarly supported the AFP's operations against the Muslim secessionists by holding and defending cleared areas. On the other hand, while the SOT teams were designed for the communist insurgency, the AFP came up with a parallel concept appropriate for the Muslim insurgency—the Salaam. Salaam units, composed of Muslim soldiers, reached out to the Muslim population through dialogue

³⁴³ G2, Philippine Army Assessment.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Zachary Abuza, "The Moro Islamic Liberation Front at 20: State of the Revolution," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 28, no. 6 (Nov/Dec, 2005), 455.

and information.³⁴⁷ Modest programs, in cooperation with civilian government agencies as well as NGOs, were also conducted by the Salaam units.

3. Tactics / Doctrine

a. MILF

Throughout its existence, MILF operations have been a mixture of the semi-conventional and the unconventional. There were two instances where the MILF has confronted the government forces in a semi-conventional manner: the height of the Muslim insurgency in 1973–1976 (when the MILF was still part of the MNLF), and during the ‘all-out-war’ of former President Estrada in 2000. In these instances, the MILF fought semi-positional warfare against the AFP. After suffering military defeat in these periods, the MILF shifted back to guerrilla warfare to allow itself to consolidate.

As pointed out, the MILF’s ability to stay in AFP-recognized semi-permanent camps allows it to control some areas. From these controlled areas, the MILF gets to build its forces. Likewise, it is from these controlled areas where it launches its operations—when it has needed to show to the government that it still remains a formidable force. Showing its strength provides the MILF leverage at the negotiating table. When attacked by government forces and odds are not in its favor, the MILF calls for a cessation of hostilities. This has become a pattern of the MILF in its confrontations with the AFP.

The MILF have deftly used terrorism and sabotage to influence the actions of government forces. One typical example is the conducting of bombings in major cities in Mindanao to divert government forces engaged with MILF forces in other areas. The MILF recognizes the shortage of AFP manpower when it is engaged in multiple areas. AFP forces would shift to augment the Philippine National Police (PNP) elements securing the urban centers. Another MILF tactic is to flag down and burn transport vehicles, thus plying the main highways (e.g., Davao-Tacurong-Isulan-Cotabato, Davao-

³⁴⁷ Jonathan P. Hastings, Krishnamurti A. Mortela and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *The Strategy-Legitimacy Paradigm: Getting it Right in the Philippines [Electronic Resource]* (Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2008), 166.

Kabacan-Cotabato). This forces the AFP troops to disperse in order to secure the main lines of communication.

While it officially denies the use of terrorism, the MILF's links to the Abu Sayyaf Group and, more recently, with Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)—would point to its use. The MILF's links with both groups works to its advantage in many ways. The ASG provides the MILF a degree of plausible deniability for any terrorist attacks it initiates.³⁴⁸ On the other hand, its JI links have provided MILF members bomb-making capabilities. Further, as pointed out by Abuza, the MILF's links with JI may get the attention of the U.S. government. In turn, the U.S. could compel the Philippine government to make concessions to the MILF to resolve the conflict, thus also addressing the JI problem.³⁴⁹

b. AFP

How the AFP fights the MILF is quite different compared to the CPP/NPA. AFP tactics, given the nature of the MILF's operations, are a mix of semi-conventional and unconventional. When the MILF chooses to fight in a semi-conventional manner, it provides the AFP an advantage. Fighting a positional warfare would allow the AFP to concentrate its forces towards MILF positions. Further, the AFP can maximize the advantage in firepower provided by its artillery, armor assets, and air assets. This firepower advantage was manifested during the 1973–1976 fighting in Central Mindanao. In this type of engagement, the AFP can employ the principle of mass. If the MILF chooses to fight a guerrilla type of warfare, small unit tactics remain a potent answer to counter the MILF forces.

AFP efforts in combating the MILF problem were not limited to combat operations. Just as Muslim-dominated areas exhibit the conditions of poverty, the AFP complements its military operations with CMO. This is where *Salaam* units, in coordination with civilian government agencies and NGOS, make an impact. These efforts strive to gain the population's confidence in the government with modest programs (e.g., relief operations, free medical/dental check-up).

³⁴⁸ Abuza, "The Moro Islamic Liberation Front at 20: State of the Revolution," 471.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 467–468.

With the ongoing peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF, AFP operations are limited to areas outside of MILF-declared camps. This limitation presents a dilemma for AFP troops. If rogue MILF or ASG elements engage AFP troops, these elements can withdraw to MILF camps to escape pursuit operations. MILF camps serve as safe haven for these elements. Pursuing government troops are then prevented from going after these elements, as they may clash with MILF forces. Clashes may escalate the conflict, and accusations that the government troops are guilty of violating the ongoing cessation of hostilities, with the possibility of hurting the peace talks. On the other hand, if clashes between government troops and these elements occur near MILF camps, there is always the danger of government troops being overrun by MILF troops. A classic example of this is the recent October 2011, Basilan incident where 19 SF soldiers were killed. This type of incident poses questions about the sincerity of the MILF regarding the peace negotiations, as well as the issue of the MILF coddling rogue elements. This AFP dilemma is a card played very well by the MILF, to its favor.

4. Weapons / Technology

a. MILF

In terms of weapons, the MILF forces are better armed compared to their compatriots in the CPP/NPA, with an arsenal was mostly of high-powered firearms (M-16, M-14, M-203 Grenade Launchers, a few sniper rifles). These are complemented with machine guns (a mix of .50 and .30 calibers), mortars (60mm and 81mm), and anti-tank/anti-personnel weapons (RPGs and B-40 rocket launchers).

Similar to the case of the CPP/NPA, the AFP has become a source of weapons for the MILF, either through captured firearms and/or through pilferage by AFP scalawags. The support from known sympathetic countries (e.g., Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia) gained by the MILF in the earlier years of its existence explains the sudden increase of weapons in its arsenal. Further, its established ties with the JI have enhanced its capability to conduct terrorist activities in support of its operations.

The MILF, over the years, has shown how its self-reliance cushions the impact of the non-availability of external support. It was able to fabricate cloned RPGs and convert mortar ammunition into B-40-type rockets.³⁵⁰ Given its ties with JI, the MILF has further benefited from a better technology for bomb-making.

Overall, the MILF are well-armed. However, a possible weakness that the AFP can utilize is the MILF's inability to fight a sustained conflict. The experiences of the 2000 'all-out-war' would suggest to this. The question that must be answered is how far can the MILF's resources (e.g., ammunition, food, medicines, etc.) go to fight prolonged engagements. This would help the AFP well in planning the next major campaign if talks fail.

b. AFP

The AFP, on the other hand, has maintained its marked advantage in weapons and technology. Fortunately for the AFP, it has the artillery, armor, and air assets that are sorely absent from the MILF arsenal. While the MILF has types of weapons that are similar to those of the AFP, the AFP has the greater number of weapons.

For sustained operations, the government arsenal in Bataan has provided the AFP with a steady source of small arms ammunition. In addition, the continuous, though varying, U.S. support for the Philippine military supports the expectation that the AFP would outlast the MILF in a prolonged conventional military engagement. Moreover, the 2000 'all-out-war' has already provided the AFP concrete answers to that question.

E. ANALYSIS / CONCLUSION

The Post-Independence period has seen a change in the nature of threats to Philippine security—from external to internal. Yet, while the nature of the threat has changed significantly since the colonial period, warfare has remained irregular in character. A very slight exception, however, was noted with regard to the MILF threat,

³⁵⁰ G2, Philippine Army Assessment.

which provided a certain degree of semi-conventional character. Even then, the history throughout the period supports the idea that conflicts were predominantly irregular in character. Figure 6 below sums up the irregular warfare characteristics present in conflicts throughout the period, relative to the various internal threat groups.

POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA WARFARE						
Conflict	HUKBALAHAP		COMMUNIST		MORO SECESSIONISTS	
Force	Huks	AFP	CPP/NPA	AFP	MILF	AFP
Small Units	X	HYBRID	X	HYBRID	X	HYBRID
Comparatively Under Resourced	X		X		X	
Irregular Tactics / Doctrine	X	HYBRID	X	HYBRID	X	HYBRID
Terrorism	X		X		X	
Leveraging existing Technology	X	X	X	X	X	X
Protracted Conflict	X		X		X	
Attrition Objectives	X		X		X	

Figure 10. Post-Independence Era Filipino irregular warfare characteristics

For the past fifty or so years, the AFP has lived through an environment characterized by irregular warfare. The first half of the period can be considered its growing years, while the second half represents its maturing years. The period has shown how the AFP has followed a generally conventional form of growth, but at the same time, has fought an unconventional form of warfare. The conventional side was due to its being a standing army, exhibiting a large U.S. influence; while the unconventional side was in response to what the situation called for on the ground. Further, the AFP has exhibited a mixed use of conventional and unconventional fighting to suit the dictates of the threat. The AFP experience speaks of what Dr. Arquilla mentioned in his book, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, about standing armies fighting an irregular warfare, and of hybrid

wars. Additionally, the AFP experience shows the propensity for small unit operations and the innovativeness required by irregular warfare.

The nature of the threat in the Philippines not only shows its irregular character but also points to the protracted nature of the conflict. Evidently, the internal threats of the country have managed to persist for almost four decades. The cost it has entailed the Philippine government to address the conflict, not to mention the collateral cost to society, runs to epic proportions. Other than costs, it presents the danger of apathy. The AFP—and more so, the individual soldier—might settle with the view that it has become the way of life. Such a view runs the risk of stealing that sense of urgency to end the conflict. Indeed, experience shows that insurgencies require more than a military solution. This brings us to the question of what is there to do. The answer is for the AFP to address the military side of it, and to address it well. This brings us back to irregular warfare; the AFP must become masters of irregular warfare. It must continue to effectively conduct small unit operations.

Peace negotiations are currently ongoing between the Philippine government and the various threat groups. Peace would be good for all quarters—the government, the insurgents, and more so, the population that has borne the brunt of the sufferings caused by the conflict. However, the Philippine government cannot talk peace while the AFP suffers setbacks at the tactical level. The government cannot afford to talk peace while incidents like the October 2011, Basilan fiasco happens. The AFP must avoid these kinds of setbacks. It erodes the morale of the soldier, while it allows the enemy to negotiate from a position of strength. The AFP must not settle with the flimsy excuse of “charged to experience.” Rather, it must dominate at the tactical level; and it requires effective small unit operations to dominate.

Peace talks are welcome. But the threat groups must realize that they cannot win, that the only resort left is peace. The AFP, on the other hand, must demonstrate that it will fight and win.

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VII. GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR ERA

“We walked all afternoon and toward evening stopped at another coconut hut to sleep. But just before sundown, sundalo were spotted again. So we took refuge on top of a ridge. When gunfire erupted at the bottom of the hill, several Abu Sayyaf ran down to engage the enemy. They returned later, exulting in their achievement. We learned that they had beheaded three AFP soldiers and ransacked their belongings. One of the victims had been a medic. They brought back his medical bag for our future use.”

-Gracia Burnham, American hostage of the Abu Sayyaf Group³⁵¹

A. INTRODUCTION

The final era of irregular warfare in the Philippines that this study will examine will be the most recent era, one that continues to this day. This is the era defined by the United States as the Global War on Terror (GWOT), but from the Filipino perspective is more accurately an era of national and ideological/religious terrorism. Despite the end of the Cold War, and the diminishment of regional communist movements, irregular warfare activities have continued to flourish in the Philippines. Organizations such as the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), the Rajah Solaiman Islamic Movement (RSIM), Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), and the Moro Islamic liberation Front (MILF) have found an environment that is well suited to their organizations’ survival and strategy. Equally important, the government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) has conducted irregular warfare over the same period, with special operations forces. The defining irregular warfare characteristics of this era are the use of terrorism and special operations. Both are firmly inside the parameters of the irregular warfare definition laid out by Dr. Arquilla. In fact, he believes that terrorism is so quintessentially irregular that he places it as one of the three primary legs of his irregular warfare triad.³⁵² Dr. Arquilla is also clear that the missions of military elites, as well as the roles of other special operations forces, can be qualified as irregular by their small size, use of guerrilla tactics, and other employment methods.³⁵³

³⁵¹ Gracia Burnham with Dean Merrill, *In the Presence of My Enemies* (Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2003), 99.

³⁵² Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011), 5.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 6.

This chapter will look at the most recent evolution of irregular warfare activity in the Philippines by first describing the environmental, and then continue with an analysis of organization, tactics, doctrine, and use of technology. Within each area, the study will be organized into the subgroups of anti-government (which will analyze the key threat groups to include ASG, RSIM, and MILF/JI), and government (which will include the AFP). This chapter will also include an analysis of the United States organization, doctrine, and use of technology within this most recent era inside the Philippines. The U.S. has been a primary player in the Philippines throughout the GWOT and has had significant influence on the strategy employed by the GRP; therefore, we would be remiss if we did not include them in the study.

In this chapter, we will see that all of the characteristics of irregular warfare are present in abundance, including terrorism. Small units, irregular tactics, leveraging available technology, and fighting that is protracted to cause attrition—all of these are dominant aspects in the strategies of both the anti-government and the government forces. In this era, there are some inconsistencies from the characteristics commonly seen in the earlier eras. First, the AFP is relatively better resourced than the anti-government forces. With the support of the United States, the AFP also employs new technology. Interestingly, these factors do not change the fundamental nature of the AFP.

B. ENVIRONMENT / SITUATION

For centuries, the Muslim population of the Southern Islands of the Philippines has stood up against the various primary controlling powers governing the Philippine Islands. Conflicts against the Spanish, Americans, and Philippine governments have been numerous and vicious. These battles and campaigns have been fought for a variety of reasons, including land rights, autonomy, cessation, economic, and human rights. The various fractured organizations and multiple purposes have created a muddled and confusing situation. What is clear, however, is that the minority Muslim population is disenfranchised from the majority Catholic population, which controls the country. Many in the south live in abject poverty—which they see in stark contrast to what they perceive as the better living standards of the Northern Filipinos. Meanwhile, from the southern perspective, the northern population continues to move south—to take and use the

valuable and limited land for their own prosperity. This has left the Muslim population feeling infringed upon and used, while seeing none of the benefits of citizenship. To the Filipino Muslim, the illegitimate GRP has used its military might to control the South, while the underrepresented Muslims have been taken advantage of. This has created a situation ripe for anti-government or pro-Muslim organizations to flourish.

Certainly, the GRP has its own side to the story, one that includes the idea that all islands and people of the country should respect and abide by the laws of the legitimate government. The GRP understands that solutions to poverty take time, require communal effort, and are secondary to security, which is of the highest concern. The Muslim population of the South is often perceived as not helping itself and working against those who would help them prosper. Who is right and who is wrong is not the subject of this thesis. What is important is that anti-government organizations have grown and flourished in this environment. These include the ASG, MILF, RSIM, and the external transnational terrorist organizations JI and Al Qaeda (AQ), which they have allied.

The 1980s, were a time of sweeping change for the Philippines. The Peoples Power Revolution in 1986, deposed the dictatorial leadership of Ferdinand Marcos, and promoted democracy.³⁵⁴ However, these sweeping changes also created significant political instability. From 1986–2001, there were no less than eight significant coup d'états within the country.³⁵⁵ As Maria Ressa points out in her book *Seeds of Terror*, “the ensuing chaos, reorganization of the political landscape, and shifts in power,”³⁵⁶ allowed external terrorist organizations to penetrate the environment and begin to organize for operations. The environment must have seemed perfect for transnational terrorist organizations such as JI and AQ. The Philippines already had a large Muslim population who was not happy, and they lived in an established safe haven in the Southern Islands. The Southern Islands include difficult terrain dominated by jungle and vast tidal systems.

³⁵⁴ Maria A. Ressa, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of Al-Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia*, (New York: Free Press, 2003), 12.

³⁵⁵ Clinton Fernandes, *Hot Spots: Asia and Oceania*, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008), 191–193.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁵⁷ The population is not welcoming to the government and therefore, the anti-government Islamic organizations find the area quite secure to organize, train, and survive. Travel is relatively easy for someone who remains discreet and has money. Furthermore, as previously stated, the Muslim population has a history of armed uprising. Weapons and an irregular warfare tradition were resident within the population. The Southern Philippine Secessionist Groups (SPSG) have been associated with one of the longest running insurgencies in the world.³⁵⁸ Simply put, the population was ripe for exploitation by Islamic leaders who had an agenda and the raw materials to wage irregular warfare.

For the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), this period is the continuation of what must seem like a never-ending fight against internal security threats. After facing fifty years of continuous counterinsurgency operations against the Huks and various communist insurgencies, the AFP has been routinely employed against the SPSG and Islamic terrorist organizations. Due to this continuous involvement in domestic counterinsurgency, the AFP has continuously adjusted its strategy in response to the new policies of changing administrations and leadership. However, the AFP has always worked to find a solution to the conflict. This search for solution while managing resources and multiple threats has produced some remarkable irregular warfare efforts, particularly within the realm of special operations.

For the United States, this period in the Philippines has been seen both as the second front in the war on terrorism and as America's forgotten frontline.³⁵⁹ For the U.S. military, conducting Operation Enduring Freedom—Philippines has meant accepting certain restrictions and constraints which included “legal prohibitions, strict operational

³⁵⁷ Max Boot and Richard Bennet, “Treading Softly in the Philippines: Why a Low-Intensity Counterinsurgency Strategy Seems to Be Working There,” *The Weekly Standard*, Jan 5, 2009, Vol. 14, No. 16 <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/015/956zznwj.asp?nopager=1> (accessed 7 Sept 2011).

³⁵⁸ Peña and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Finding the Missing Link to a Successful Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy [Electronic Resource]*, 7.

³⁵⁹ Adrienne Mong, “America's Forgotten Frontline: The Philippines; U.S. hails joint exercise as textbook case of effective counterinsurgency tactics,” *NBC News*, October 10, 2010, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/39444744/ns/world_news-asia_pacific/t/americas-forgotten-frontline-philippines/ (accessed 7 September 2011).

directives, host-nation caveats, and reduced U.S. forces.”³⁶⁰ These restrictions have forced a change in operational thinking which has dictated that U.S. forces act not as the primary counterinsurgent, but strictly as a supporting agent to the authorized primary counterinsurgent, the Armed Forces of the Philippines. This change in thinking has precipitated success in operations, which may not have happened if U.S. forces had been allowed to operate, unilaterally and indiscriminately, as they had in Afghanistan and Iraq. While not preferred by the traditional U.S. military establishment, conditions similar to the ones present in the Philippines should be sought when prosecuting a global counterinsurgency campaign.³⁶¹

This change in role for U.S. forces is certain to have created some friction and frustration, for it runs counter to the American way of war, a storied tradition of fighting annihilation-style total war with the direct application of overwhelming force, firepower, and resources against the problem and the enemy.³⁶² As part of the GWOT, operations in the Philippines have always been a sort of quiet sister, not frequently discussed or covered by the mainstream media or the U.S. military—while simultaneously, being billed internally and externally as an example of successful operations.³⁶³ In OEF-P, the U.S. presence is small, American casualties have been relatively rare, the financial cost of operations is comparatively low, and of the highest importance is the fact that, for the most part, the government of the Philippines has been a welcoming partner.³⁶⁴ These factors, plus the appeal of the more intense and less constrained wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, have allowed the operations in the Philippines to quietly continue for over a decade.³⁶⁵ This characteristic is of some benefit to the U.S. irregular warfare operations in the Philippines, for fundamental to the definition of irregular warfare success is the idea of a protracted, slow-burning, small-scale conflict. Instead of a single decisive battle,

³⁶⁰ Petit, “OEF-Philippines: Thinking COIN, Practicing FID,” 10–15.

³⁶¹ David Kilcullen, “Countering Global Insurgency,” *Small Wars Journal*, Version 2.2, 30 Nov 2004.

³⁶² Weigley, *The American Way of War*.

³⁶³ Wilson, “Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation,” 4.

³⁶⁴ Mong, “America’s Forgotten Frontline: The Philippines.”

³⁶⁵ Boot and Bennet, “Treading Softly in the Philippines.”

the masters of irregular warfare seek a long struggle aimed at wearing down the enemy.³⁶⁶

C. ORGANIZATION

1. Anti-Government Forces

Due to their very nature, the organization of the anti-government groups is non-standard. Yet throughout the main organizations—the ASG, the MILF, and the RSIM—there are multiple variations on organization, which span the spectrum from those resembling conventional forces, to those with smaller, more secret and cellular structures.

The MILF has roughly 10,000 members organized throughout the Southern Islands. The core leadership of the MILF includes a political central committee, which is considered legitimate by the GRP. These leaders control the military organization of the MILF, but when MILF commanders' agendas differ from those of the central committee; then these forces are declared rogue or lawless MILF.³⁶⁷ The MILF includes robust recruitment and media branches. Outside of the political organization, the MILF includes forces that are organized in a military arm, the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF). This military arm includes 14 Guerrilla Base Commands (GBC).³⁶⁸ The GBC commanders can then organize the operational elements as necessary. This can resemble a conventional force, yet realistically, the troop strength is small, and guerrilla operations dominate. In October of 2011, members of the ASG and MILF's 114th Base Command were involved in a battle with AFP Special Operations Forces in the MILF stronghold of Al Barka on the Island of Basilan. During this 10-hour long battle, the ASG/MILF forces were able to overwhelm the AFP units, virtually annihilating them, killing 19, wounding 12, and resulting in another six missing in action and two captured.³⁶⁹ As the AFP SOF entered into the MILF's territory, the MILF was able to mobilize a sufficiently sized unit

³⁶⁶ Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, 9.

³⁶⁷ Boot and Bennet, "Treading Softly in the Philippines," 3.

³⁶⁸ Peña and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Finding the Missing Link to a Successful Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy [Electronic Resource]*, 17.

³⁶⁹ Roel Pareno, "MILF Kills 19 Soldiers," *The Philippine Star* (Oct 20, 2011), <http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?publicationSubCategoryId=63&articleId=739276> accessed 31 October 2011

to destroy an AFP unit, which as a SOF unit was comprised of high quality soldiers. This is just one example of the larger guerrilla elements that the SPSGs can muster if necessary.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, a small cellular operational unit conducted the ASG/RSIM operation against the MV Super Ferry 14 on 27 February 2004. Just a single individual conducted the actual placement of the bomb, a television packed with explosives. The result of the operation was 116 dead, 300 injured, and the sinking of the ferry.³⁷⁰

These variations highlight the flexibility, and imaginative thinking necessary to conduct operations with limited resources. When the anti-government forces have enough force, and have other tactical factors in their advantage, they can openly challenge government units. However, the majority of operations are conducted by small, cellular units, which can hide, strike quickly, and then fade into the background.

The structure of the ASG is a fine example of an irregular warfare organization. They are structured just enough to function, but not so rigidly that the entire organization would fall if it was penetrated. The ASG has been described as a “very loose coalition of many groups of radical Muslim terrorist leaders commanding their own loyal followers in the Southern Philippines.”³⁷¹ The ASG, which began with around 1,300 members, has dwindled to around 500. It is split into two main sub groups: one on Jolo Island, and one on Basilan Island. The organization is said to have had an Islamic Executive Council at one time which controlled five functional staffs—including personnel/operations, logistics/supply, finance/budget, and liaison/medical. However, the actual operation of the organization is less formal than this military staff organization would imply. Instead, the ASG has been described as a bandit like organization, one that is obviously willing to use terrorism and other violence to advance their political and financial goals.³⁷² Yet, the

³⁷⁰ Jeremy Bartel and Moises Nayve, Jr., *The Rajah Solaiman Islamic Movement (RSIM) and the Rise of Radical Islamic Converts in the Philippines: A Major Security Concern* (Thesis for U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, 2008), 1.

³⁷¹ Rommel C. Banloi, “Radical Muslim Terrorism in the Philippines.” Forthcoming in Andrew Tan (ed), *Handbook on Terrorism and Insurgency in Southeast Asia*. London: Edward Elgar Publishing, Limited 2006. Available from http://www.kaf.ph/pdfdb//119_pub.pdf; accessed 03 Apr 2007

³⁷² Peña and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Finding the Missing Link to a Successful Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy [Electronic Resource]*, 20–21.

ASG is able to task organize as appropriate for the various operations they conduct, from kidnapping for ransom, to grenade attacks, IED placements and other hit and run guerrilla style attacks.

The RSIM has a structure with a core leader, a central committee, and an organization broken into three sub groups for special operations, special actions, and security. The RSIM is estimated to have had about 50 members during its peak. These members operate in a strict cellular and compartmentalized structure. The use of this style of organization made identifying and tracking members extremely difficult.³⁷³

The bottom line is that the anti-government organizations which operate in the Southern Philippines, be they Muslim secessionist groups, terror groups, or criminal enterprise organizations, all operate for survival and success. They maintain a gang-like protective culture, similar to the protections offered by the barangay culture in every other period of Filipino irregular warfare. When necessary, these groups can come together for a common purpose. More often than not, though, they are isolated and self-reliant. They are the essence of irregular warfare.

2. Armed Forces of the Philippines

During this period, the AFP has been forced to operate in a variety of conflicts across the spectrum of warfare. They have worked in areas deemed contested, controlled, and uncontrolled. They have faced a variety of threats, mostly irregular, while maintaining the ability to respond conventionally to external aggressors. Most importantly, the AFP has often had to confront these threats in areas where their own population is living and hoping for peace and stability. This has forced the AFP to use ingenuity in the use of force. One large area of focus over the last decade has been the development and use of Special Operations Forces (SOF).

The AFP Special Operations Forces are organized by their parent services. Their training, management, and funding is also provided by the parent services, while the units are deployed and commanded by the AFP geographical unified commands. AFPSOF is primarily broken down by service: Army, Navy, and Air Force. Within the Philippine

³⁷³ Bartel and Nayve, *The Rajah Solaiman Islamic Movement (RSIM)*, 24.

Army, the largest provider of AFPSOF, the forces fall under the command of the Philippine Army Special Operations Command (PASOCOM). This command has responsibility for the three SOF army units: the Philippine Army Special Forces Regiment Airborne (SFRA), the First Scout Ranger Regiment (FSRR), and the Light Reaction Battalion (LRB). The SFRA is modeled after the U.S. Army Special Forces Regiment, the “Green Berets”—small units designed to conduct sensitive missions in difficult environments. The SFRA consists of 1,200 personnel in three operational battalions. The FSRR is a highly trained and aggressive infantry unit, similar to the U.S. army Ranger Regiment. Designed to move fast and fight hard, the FSRR has roughly 1,800 personnel in three operational battalions. The LRB is a top-tier counter-terrorist unit within the AFP. It is small, with approximately 400 personnel broken down into three companies. The LRB is composed of personnel trained within the SFRA and FSRR. Within the Philippine Navy, there are two SOF units: the Naval Special Warfare Group, within the Fleet Forces, and composed of about 400 personnel specializing in SEAL operations; and the Force Reconnaissance Battalion (FRB) located under the Philippine Marine Corps. The FRB has approximately 500 personnel in three companies, and is responsible for special reconnaissance in support of Marine and Navy operations. Within the Philippine Air Force, the 710th Special Operations Wing has approximately 2,000 personnel, responsible for supporting the special operations forces of the other services. The final unit of the AFPSOF is the Philippines Joint Special Operations Group (AFPJSOG)—a unit comprised of Army, Navy, and Air Force Special Forces units. The AFPJSOG is responsible for special missions under the direction of the AFP.³⁷⁴

3. United States

The Joint Special Operations Task Force—Philippines (JSOTF-P), is a temporary task force organized to conduct a specific task in support of Operation Enduring Freedom- Philippines (OEF-P) and the greater U.S. GWOT. The JSOTF-P is a special operations specific task force that falls under the command of the Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC) and the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM). Once the

³⁷⁴ Antonio R Lastimado and Arturo G. Rojas, *The Armed Forces of the Philippines and Special Operations* (Thesis for U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, 2004), 23–24.

JSOTF-P's mission is deemed complete, it will be disbanded. The JSOTF-P is comprised of approximately 600 personnel, from all four services of the United States military. Because it is a special operations task force, the bulk of these troops come from the U.S. Army Special Forces and the U.S. Navy Special Warfare units. The JSOTF-P operates within a Joint Special Operations Area, which includes the Southern Islands of the Philippines along with Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago. The headquarters for the JSOTF-P is located at Camp Navarro in Zamboanga, co-located with the AFP geographical unified command—the Western Mindanao Command (WESTMINCOM). The bulk of the task force is broken down into three subordinate regional task forces, responsible for operations in Mindanao, Sulu, and the Archipelago. These task forces operate side-by-side with their AFP counterparts deployed in the area.³⁷⁵

D. TACTICS / DOCTRINE

1. Anti-Government Forces

The goals of the anti-government organizations in the Southern Philippines are as varied as the organizations themselves. The MILF's political goals are to establish a Muslim social order and an Islamic state. A basic tenet of the Islamic radicals, as stated by the RSIM, is that the Philippine Islands were originally a Muslim nation, and that the colonization by the Christian Spanish pushed out the rightful Muslims. Therefore, they believe that the islands should be returned to Muslim control and administered under an Islamic government and Sharia Law.³⁷⁶ The objectives of the MILF are Islamic outreach and Jihad. Their four-point plan outlines a diplomatic offensive: Islamic community action which demonstrates their resolve, peace negotiations for political concessions, and military build-up, with military offensive action if peace talks fail.³⁷⁷ The goals of the ASG are less defined, and while they are along the same lines as the RSIM and the

³⁷⁵ Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines Blog, <http://jsotf-p.blogspot.com/> (Accessed 5 Jul 2011)

³⁷⁶ Bartel and Nayve, *The Rajah Solaiman Islamic Movement (RSIM)*, 23.

³⁷⁷ Peña and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Finding the Missing Link to a Successful Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy [Electronic Resource]*, 17–18.

MILF, they are more often likened to criminal enterprise and financial gain—while simultaneously working to discredit the GRP.³⁷⁸

The strategies employed by these organizations are remarkably similar. Due to the fact that they cannot directly overthrow the GRP, or threaten annihilation of the AFP or the GRP, they have instead chosen an irregular campaign strategy. These organizations challenge the GRP by attacking them where they are able, in any manner that they can. These attacks have two goals: to de-legitimize the GRP within the population and to legitimize the Islamic leadership as a credible entity. Because there is a definite safe haven in the Southern islands, an area permissible to the Islamic organizations and not permissible to the legitimate government of the Philippines, the anti-government organizations have a significant area where their message resonates with the population. Simultaneously, because this area exists, it is nearly impossible to eradicate these anti-government forces. The government cannot control the region without massive numbers of troops. Therefore, a vacuum of power is produced, which the Islamic organizations fill with their own control.

The anti-government forces have signaled an understanding of the fact that they do not need to win, they simply need not lose. The longer they can stay in the fight, the more legitimacy they gain—ultimately the anti-government forces “tread the long path to authority and legitimacy.”³⁷⁹ If they can persist long enough, they will be able to gain their goals through concession, or build enough strength to offer a legitimate and direct challenge to the GRP.

The method they use to stay in a protracted fight has two main lines of operation. The first is to attack the GRP, and the forces of the GRP, inside the Islamic safe havens when the GRP encroaches into an area where the anti-government forces have the upper hand, or when targets of opportunity present themselves. The second line of effort is to

³⁷⁸ Peña and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Finding the Missing Link to a Successful Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy* [Electronic Resource], 21.

³⁷⁹ William R. Andrews, *The Village War: Vietnamese Communist Revolutionary Activities in Dinh Tuong Province 1960–1964* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973), 31.

attack the GRP outside of the Islamic safe havens; this effort is a continuous reminder to the population that the GRP is considered illegitimate and that the Islamic movements have not gone away.

Supporting these two lines of effort is a prime reason why the irregular operations conducted by the anti-government forces take the form of either small unit guerrilla operations inside safe havens, or terrorist attacks outside of safe havens. The AFP is a legitimate and very real threat to these anti-government groups, therefore they need to maintain the ability to hide, attack, and then melt away. On their home turf, they can hide enough military assets to challenge the AFP units when able. Outside of their safe haven, it is much more difficult to hide; in these scenarios the insurgent often chooses to use cellular, compartmentalized units to maintain operational security and ensure the success of the attacks.

2. Armed Forces of the Philippines

In order to understand the AFP's use of irregular warfare against anti-government forces during the war on terror, we must first look at the Philippine national strategy. The Philippine Presidential Executive Order Number 21, Series 2001, is the National Internal Security Plan (NISP). The NISP is a response to the growing insurgencies in the Southern provinces, and looks to address the root causes, and neutralize the insurgents who exploit these causes.³⁸⁰ Succinctly, the NISP looks to promote good governance, reduce poverty, and resolve the insurgency by applying all four pillars of national power: diplomatic, information, military, and economic. The five imperatives of the NISP are: (1) to ensure a responsive and effective government, demonstrating that it is a better choice than the insurgents' organizations; (2) to ensure unity of efforts, with the understanding that insurgency is a shared concern of the entire bureaucracy—including non-governmental organizations (NGO's), people's organizations (PO's), and the entire citizenry; (3) to maximize the use of intelligence as a responsibility of all government agencies and as a critical pre-requisite to government response; (4) to manage violence and maintain law and order; and (5) to intensify a public information campaign for a stronger link between

³⁸⁰ Peña and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Finding the Missing Link to a Successful Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy* [Electronic Resource], 23.

the government and the people.³⁸¹ The operational methodology used in this plan is called Clear-Hold-Consolidate-Develop (C-H-C-D). The clear and hold stages are the responsibility of the AFP and the Philippine National Police (PNP), who must defeat insurgents in their own safe havens and maintain a reasonable level of security managed by the government, so that the consolidation and development can proceed safely. Consolidation and development are the primary responsibility of other national and non-governmental agencies, who must seek ways to eradicate the root causes of social issues and insurgency.³⁸² Because the Philippine Department of National Defense and the AFP are the lead agencies for the security aspects of the strategy, they themselves have developed an internal strategy for attacking the insurgencies. This is “Oplan Bantay-Laya” (Defend the Freedom), a plan to defend local communities and protect the population.³⁸³ Bantay-Laya clearly defines the military role as clearing, holding, and then supporting the follow-on consolidation and development. The strategy also focuses military operations on the insurgencies, by using a heavy aspect of Civil Military Operations (CMO) in coordination with Intelligence and Combat Operations, with a goal of neutralizing the anti-government forces.³⁸⁴

Realistically, what this looks like for the AFP is counterinsurgency operations (COIN). The AFP uses larger conventional forces to conduct combat clearing and security operations, and the Navy conducts coastal patrolling and interdiction/police operations. CMO is used to gain access to communities and build intelligence for other operations, and the AFP SOF is used to attack networks, leadership, insurgent cells, supply lines, external support, and more. Due to the inherent nature of military forces, some are more suited to certain missions than others. A large infantry division is big, unwieldy, slow to react, and filled by a majority of lesser trained soldiers led by a few better trained officers and NCOs—however, they bring a large presence and an ability to control, based upon their size. Special operations forces are generally small, more well-

³⁸¹ Peña and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Finding the Missing Link to a Successful Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy* [Electronic Resource], 24–25.

³⁸² Ibid., 26.

³⁸³ Ibid., 28.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 43.

trained at all levels, and quick in reaction and skill, but less robust—so therefore, they have a smaller “footprint.” Both are best suited for different aspects of COIN: the larger units to control large areas and provide persistent presence, while SOFs can be more suited to specific missions. Think in terms of a police department: the patrol officers do routine work and police the area they are assigned, while the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) forces respond to situations which need specific skills that the patrol officers do not have. In the same way, homicide detectives bring their special skills to homicide investigations. Furthermore, the police need a government to give them oversight, a justice system, and the authority to conduct their work. None of these groups can be successful without the other. In COIN, the same concept applies to the relationship of the individual military forces, both with each other and with other government agencies—they must all work together. Of course, a well-organized and directed Special Operations Force can even have a big impact on a large area, if properly applied. The initial phases of Operation Enduring Freedom—Afghanistan was a major success for USSOF. Large American military units could not be mobilized as rapidly as desired, so the SOF was deployed rapidly with the full support of all the governments’ power. The impact these forces had was undoubtedly astounding, they rapidly allied themselves with friendly Afghan forces and executed a campaign which saw the rapid collapse of the Taliban government in Afghanistan.

The AFP has placed a large emphasis on the development of its different special operations forces, as evidenced by their continued existence and funding. Strategically, operationally, and tactically, these forces have found themselves routinely involved in the war on terror and insurgencies in the Southern Philippines while supporting their principle mission in Internal Security Operations (ISO)³⁸⁵. Most of the missions they have conducted over the last decade have been of an irregular warfare nature. Lastimado and Rojas (both Majors in the AFP Army and Marine Corps respectively), provide a succinct description which supports the irregular nature of these forces.

“In the present setting, where the Philippine insurgency problem has consumed so much of the country’s resources, PASOF, considering its

³⁸⁵ Lastimado and Rojas, *The Armed Forces of the Philippines and Special Operations*, 26.

ability to function at many different levels and its flexibility in shaping the environment for combat, is one of the significant means of resolving the threat posed by insurgencies. The mission of the Special Forces Regiment (Airborne) in Internal Security Operations environment is to plan for and conduct Direct Action Operations, Special Reconnaissance Operations, and Combat Readiness Assessment. It is also responsible for the training of maneuver units in support of the AFP's mission. The First Scout Ranger Regiment does its traditional Direct Action and Special Reconnaissance operations. Direct Action Operations are normally short-duration operations with a limited scope. They may require a PASOF team to infiltrate a hostile area, attack a target, and conduct a preplanned exfiltration, which may include long-term, stay-behind operations. The DAO achieves specific, well-defined, time-sensitive results of strategic and operational significance. These are often characterized by surgical precision, typically leaving smaller "footprints" than conventional operations. As a result, they can create greater adverse effects on the enemy than a conventional force of similar size. Special Reconnaissance Operations are reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted by PASOF, either unilaterally, or through other AFP units or indigenous forces. The objective of SRO is to confirm, refute, or obtain—by visual observation or other collection methods—information on the capabilities, intentions, and activities of an actual or potential enemy. Reconnaissance missions conducted by PASOF normally have objectives that are either strategic or operational in nature, although they occur at the tactical level. The primary role of the SF in Combat Readiness Assessment and Training of maneuver units is to provide training assistance tailored to meet the specific requirements of the requesting unit. This tailoring serves to improve unit's readiness for combat, while improving its effectiveness and efficiency in all types of operations. SF personnel train individual soldiers and units of light infantry battalions to fight in combat. They possess the technical expertise and knowledge to enhance the soldier's individual skills and shape the unit's capabilities, discipline, and morale. The Special Forces basic unit is a SF team composed of twelve, highly skilled soldiers (one officer and 11 enlisted personnel). It is proficient in performing small-scale tactics, training, and in operations that are airborne, waterborne and in jungle or mountainous regions. The team is composed of personnel who are skilled in five (5) respective fields of specialization, including; operations and intelligence, demolition and sabotage, communication, weapons, and medical. Furthermore, every member is cross trained with other specializations, so as to enhance his skills. Each SF trooper has the ability to use Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) to influence a target community or individual. The SF Team is a unique, unconventional combat organization that can plan and conduct special operations across a wide range of military missions. Its tactical actions often have effects upon operational or strategic objectives. On the other

extreme, the Scout Ranger's basic unit is the 7-man team that is highly proficient in small-unit infantry tactics with the capability to operate independently. The team specializes in conducting commando raids, snipings, demolitions, reconnaissance missions and other guerrilla warfare tactics and techniques. The training of Scout Ranger is designed to develop a person's skill, stamina, and spirit. The Light Reaction Battalion's (LRB) task is to conduct counter-terrorist operations in support of the AFP's missions. The LRB's capabilities include the ability to perform reconnaissance of terrorist incidents and locations, to eliminate and/or capture terrorists (and other high value targets), and involvement in hostage rescue and personnel recovery operations. The LRB is made up of individuals who are highly trained in engaging in close quarter combat and sniping operations. Moreover, since it is the only AFP unit that is trained and equipped by the U.S. Army Special Forces, it is considered as the most capable force for military operations in urbanized terrain (MOUT)."³⁸⁶

Each aspect of the roles of these forces discussed by Lastimado and Rojas has had direct application in the clear hold strategy of the AFP, and the clear hold aspects of the NISP. The importance of special operations forces and their influence in the AFP was shown, for example, in 2010 when the island of Basilan was officially designated to be under the command of a Philippine Special Operations Task Force—Basilan (SOTF-B). Unfortunately, this endeavor has faced significant fallout concerning the battle in Al Barka on 18 October 2011.³⁸⁷ It is clear that the AFP has a robust irregular warfare capacity and capability—and that they have routinely used this option in the war on terror and insurgency.

3. United States

Since 9/11, the U.S. military has offensively sought opportunities and locations where it can engage and destroy Al Qaeda and other Al Qaeda-aligned, trans-national, non-state, terrorist organizations. One of the more rapidly and easily identified of these locations was in the Southern islands of the Republic of the Philippines.³⁸⁸ There, the regional Moro Muslim population had already been fighting for autonomy for over a

³⁸⁶ Lastimado and Rojas, *The Armed Forces of the Philippines and Special Operations*, 27–28.

³⁸⁷ Glenda M. Gloria, "Basilan: Failure of the 'Elite Command' Structure" (Move.PH 26 October 2011) https://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=169511649807145 (accessed 1 November 2011)

³⁸⁸ Boot and Bennet, "Treading Softly in the Philippines."

century. The recent decades of battle against the government of the Philippines led the Moros to seek external support by becoming an AQ affiliate—while offering them a sanctuary, support, and training location. Unfortunately for U.S. military planners, the political environment in the Philippines was one where the nation had struggled for over six centuries against external occupiers for autonomy and sovereign control of their population and territory. The government of the Philippines had established their sovereign right, and the U.S. found itself in a situation where it “cannot simply enter sovereign countries unilaterally and conduct kill-or-capture missions.”³⁸⁹

As the U.S. responded to the events of 9/11, the newly appointed president of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, visited Washington D.C. in November of 2001. Arroyo was having significant problems with Moro insurgents in the South. Of importance to the U.S. was the linkage of these groups to the trans-national terrorist organizations Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), and potentially, Al Qaeda. The ASG was responsible for operations that had specifically targeted Western and American interests, including the abduction of the Burnhams prior to 9/11.³⁹⁰ In response, Arroyo requested and accepted the assistance of the U.S. military to “advise, train and assist the AFP in the fight against the ASG.”³⁹¹ This assistance began with the Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) exercise Balikatan 02–0,³⁹² a previously scheduled element of U.S. Pacific Commands Theatre Security Cooperation Plan (TSCP). Though Balikatan 02–01 was directly linked to the Global War on Terror, which was already being conducted directly in Afghanistan, it was still legally considered an exercise and not a contingency operation.³⁹³ Therefore, when the initial conditions for U.S. forces were immediately set, they included legal prohibitions, strict operational

³⁸⁹ Fridovich and Krawchuk, “The Special Operations Forces Indirect Approach,” 24.

³⁹⁰ Walley, “Impact of Semipermissive Environment on Force-Protection in Philippine Engagements,” 36–37.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

³⁹² “Balikatan” means shoulder to shoulder in Tagalog.

³⁹³ Walley, “Impact of Semipermissive Environment on Force-Protection in Philippine Engagements,” 36–37.

directives, and host-nation caveats.³⁹⁴ These initial conditions have been held over from 2002, throughout the still-continuing mission in the Philippines.

Due to the clear prohibition on foreign militaries conducting combat operations in Philippine territory, as well as the extreme sensitivity to Philippine sovereign rights, the only method to bring U.S. troops into the Philippines was under the preexisting Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), which allowed U.S. participation in joint exercises. The VFA and the exercise-specific Terms of Reference (TOR) laid out strict rules of engagement (ROE). The ROE stated that “armed force up to and including deadly force was authorized for U.S. troops in self-defense and in defense or protection of U.S. troops, U.S. citizens, Philippine Forces, and third-country citizens designated by JTF-510, as well as in protection of AFP property and U.S. mission-essential property.”³⁹⁵ U.S. forces were not permitted to initiate combat operations, but they could react and defend if necessary,³⁹⁶ conduct and assist medical evacuations, and advise and assist AFP combat operations down to the battalion level (while not actually participating).³⁹⁷

COL David Maxwell, a former JSOTF-P Commander, elaborates: “Theater-level and national-level U.S. military leaders did not understand, to a certain extent, the SF concepts of employment and capabilities in a combat advisory mission during unconventional warfare. The combatant commander and the Secretary of Defense imposed restrictions on SF soldiers’ ability to efficiently conduct operations to accomplish the mission. Specifically, because of force-protection considerations, American SF advisers were restricted to operating at battalion level with their AFP counterparts and were not allowed to operate at lower tactical echelons required to be effective in combat situations, which was a strategic error. The belief that U.S. soldiers would be safe at a battalion headquarters implied the existence of front lines and a rear area, which is a fundamental misunderstanding of counterinsurgency and counterterrorist

³⁹⁴ Petit, “OEF-Philippines: Thinking COIN, Practicing FID,” 10.

³⁹⁵ Walley, “Impact of Semipermissive Environment on Force-Protection in Philippine Engagements,” 36.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 37–38.

³⁹⁷ Wilson, “Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation,” 7.

conditions. To see this clearly, consider that the only U.S. combat casualty in OEF-P occurred just outside an AFP division headquarters when a terrorist bomb killed a U.S. soldier.”³⁹⁸

A force cap was also specified in the TOR; this kept the number of U.S. forces able to enter the country and participate in the mission under 660, which included 500 troops at the headquarters and 160 Special Forces advisors at the battalion level.³⁹⁹ This number would fluctuate over the decades, but would never exceed the strict caps designated by the government of the Philippines (GRP). During large joint exercises, the numbers would rise to a few thousand, as visiting U.S. forces would be added to the already present JSOTF-P U.S. forces. Additionally, U.S. forces were not permitted to build any permanent bases or hard structures. “Special Forces teams live, eat, train, and work with their Philippine security-force counterparts, and they have since 2001. In the Philippines, the only bases and outposts are Philippine. All U.S. forces are integrated with military and police units in tactical outposts at the invitation of the Philippine Armed Forces Commanders. All arrangements—living, working, billeting, operational—are subject to the consent of Philippine commanders, from the Philippine chief of staff down to tactical Philippine infantry battalion commanders.”⁴⁰⁰

Furthermore, strict operational mission constraints were placed on the U.S. forces and the concepts of operations (CONOPs) were scrutinized to ensure that risk was mitigated, force protection considered, and political caveats obeyed.⁴⁰¹ Most importantly, because the AFP was the primary counterinsurgent and conducting combat operations, it was critical that U.S. forces and the AFP operate within the rule of law, obeying the Philippine ROE and respecting the Philippine criminal justice system—to include, if necessary, incorporating the national police and obtaining arrest warrants.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁸ David Maxwell, “Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines: What Would Sun Tzu Say?,” *Military Review* (May-June 2004), 20–21.

³⁹⁹ Walley, “Impact of Semipermissive Environment on Force-Protection in Philippine Engagements,” 37.

⁴⁰⁰ Petit, “OEF-Philippines: Thinking COIN, Practicing FID,” 14.

⁴⁰¹ Walley, “Impact of Semipermissive Environment on Force-Protection in Philippine Engagements,” 38–39.

⁴⁰² Petit, “OEF-Philippines: Thinking COIN, Practicing FID,” 13.

Philippine sensitivity to these matters was highlighted in 2003, when the U.S. and PI began to prepare for the next annual Balikatan exercise. Balikatan 03–01 would be modeled along the lines of the 2002 exercise, only with more troops (around 3,000), and a different location, Mindanao and Sulu Islands. The Arroyo government received significant criticism for their handling of the lead-up. Some in the Philippine public went as far as accusing the president of striking a secret deal with the U.S., which would allow the 3,000 exercise participants to conduct combat operations on Jolo Island. Ultimately, the Arroyo government came out publically with statements which “insisted that U.S. troops would not be allowed to fight in the Philippines, they will not be on combat missions, the guidance of the president is very clear, there will be no violation of the constitution or any of its laws.”⁴⁰³ Exercise Balikatan 03–01 was executed under the same restrictions as the previous operations, with the addition that U.S. forces would not accompany AFP units on combat patrols on Jolo Island.

German military historian Hans Delbruck “suggests that there are two kinds of military strategy: the strategy of annihilation, which seeks to overthrow the enemy’s military power, and the strategy of attrition, exhaustion, or erosion, which is usually employed by a strategist whose means are not great enough to permit pursuit of the direct overthrow of the enemy and who therefore resorts to the indirect approach.”⁴⁰⁴ The second strategy of Delbruck is what the United States found itself having to execute in OEF-P. Because U.S. forces could not go directly at the enemy or the problem in the Southern Philippines, another methodology for operations had to be used; this became known as the indirect approach.⁴⁰⁵

In 2006, Colonel Greg Wilson wrote an article which describes the JSOTF-P approach titled, *Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation OEF Philippines and the Indirect Approach*. In his article, he describes how the JSOTF-P has maintained a focus on working side-by-side with the Philippine host nation government to use all elements of the country’s national power to set conditions and an environment in the Southern

⁴⁰³ Richard C. Paddock, “U.S. – Philippine Mission Hits A Snag,” (*Los Angeles Times*, February 24, 2003) <http://articles.latimes.com/2003/feb/24/world/fg-phil24> accessed 7 Sept 2011

⁴⁰⁴ Russell, *The American Way of War*, xxii.

⁴⁰⁵ Maxwell, “Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines: What Would Sun Tzu Say?,” 20–21.

Philippines which will reject insurgents and allow the Philippine government to identify, isolate, and ultimately dismantle insurgent and trans-national terrorist organizations.⁴⁰⁶

Wilson describes a holistic approach based on the McCormick Diamond model, which “establishes a comprehensive framework for interactions between the host-nation government, the insurgents, the local populace, and international actors or sponsors.”⁴⁰⁷

This method focuses on six fundamentals: 1. Consider popular support as the center of gravity, 2. Enhance government legitimacy and control, 3. Focus on people’s needs and security, 4. Target insurgent safe havens, infrastructure, and support, 5. Share intelligence, and 6. Develop indigenous security forces.⁴⁰⁸

Because of the restrictions stated earlier, the JSOTF-P was forced into operating in a way that it most likely would not have chosen on its own. Without these restrictions, it is entirely possible that the U.S. would have chosen a more unilateral U.S.-style direct combat operation. Lieutenant General Fridovich, the current Deputy SOCOM Commander, former commander of SOCPAC, and one of the first commanders of the mission in the Philippines, describes the indirect course of action. The U.S. “must blend host nation capacity-building and other long-term efforts to address root causes, dissuade future terrorists, and reduce recruiting...The indirect approach demands diplomacy and respect for political sensitivities. SOCPAC focuses on working in close coordination with host nation military and political leadership, law enforcement, and U.S. country teams in the region (to include the U.S. Agency for International Development and Department of State Public Diplomacy officials). These stakeholders share the responsibility of capacity-building and leverage each others’ strengths and synchronize efforts.”⁴⁰⁹

This indirect approach is essential to understanding how the U.S. military has been influencing the strategy of the Armed Forces of the Philippines over the last ten years. The indirect approach uses all assets of U.S. power, including U.S. military capacity and capabilities, to discreetly influence host nation operations toward specified

⁴⁰⁶ Wilson, “Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation,” 4.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Fridovich and Krawchuk, “The Special Operations Forces Indirect Approach”

goals.⁴¹⁰ In the case of the Philippines, these goals, as publically stated, are “to support the comprehensive approach of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in their fight against terrorism in the southern Philippines. At the request of the Government of the Philippines, JSOTF-P works alongside the AFP to defeat terrorists and create the conditions necessary for peace, stability, and prosperity.”⁴¹¹ However, what does this truly mean? It means that the U.S. is trying to defeat terrorist networks and organizations, deny sanctuary, and eliminate international and domestic support to them—support which will allow the organizations to conduct offensive operations against the United States. These goals are generally, and ultimately, the goals of any counterinsurgent. This is LTC Petit’s premise in *Thinking COIN but Practicing FID*.⁴¹² FID, or Foreign Internal Defense, is defined by the United States military as “the participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization, to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to their security.

The focus of U.S. FID efforts is to support the host nation’s (HN’s) internal defense and development (IDAD), which can be described as the full range of measures taken by a nation to promote its growth and protect itself from the security threats described above.”⁴¹³ Petit is clear when he points out that this is an important distinction to understand—that the U.S. goals may be counterinsurgency, but the method and the mindset used in the operation must be one of FID. He continues:

“This distinction is critical for two reasons: (1) The Government of the Republic of the Philippines, not the U.S., is directly responsible for combating insurgents, terrorists and lawless elements; (2) the U.S. role is to support a sovereign nation in both building the capacity of its armed and civil-security forces, and applying that capacity against violent extremists operating in under governed regions. Tactically, the indirect approach requires clear-eyed recognition that U.S. capacity will be applied through, and not around, the host nation. This paradigm seems simple, but

⁴¹⁰ Petit, “OEF-Philippines: Thinking COIN, Practicing FID,” 10–15.

⁴¹¹ Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines Blog, <http://jsotf-p.blogspot.com/> (Accessed 5 Jul 2011)

⁴¹² Petit, “OEF-Philippines: Thinking COIN, Practicing FID,” 10–15.

⁴¹³ United States Dept of Defense, “Joint Publication 3–33 Foreign Internal Defense,” 12 July 2010 http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_22.pdf accessed 5 Jul 2011, ix.

it runs counter to U.S. military “candoism” and requires a long-term view and immense operational patience. The indirect approach does not satisfy appetites for quick, measurable results. By building capacity with host nation security forces and simultaneously applying population-focused, civil-military programs, the indirect approach rarely produces singularly spectacular results in tactical engagements. Measures of effectiveness are often best assessed over time and anecdotally.”⁴¹⁴

So how is the U.S. military in the Philippines actually able to—while thinking COIN and practicing FID—influence the sovereign government of the Philippines and its military without offending a critical ally in the Pacific? First, the current FID mission in the Philippines has drawn on the decades-old foundation of joint security cooperation between the United States and the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The U.S. and the PI, since World War II, have shared in a combined Theatre Security Cooperation Plan. This plan includes funding, training exercises, equipment sales, and status of forces agreements. There are many other aspects to this program, but the bottom line is that both countries are deeply embedded within each other’s national security interests in the Pacific.⁴¹⁵

This strong foundation of joint combined cooperation was built on top of one hundred years of relationship building, which included the American Colonial period, the critical World War II years, and the Cold War years, which together cemented a permanent U.S./PI alliance. With this foundation, the U.S. has been able to embed military advisers and influences at all level of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. With strong these trusting relationships, and this persistent presence and access achieved—the U.S. has been able to “implement the “indirect approach” methodology, applying U.S. capacity strictly “through or with” the Armed Forces of the Philippines against a common enemy and for the population. The indirect approach is both a philosophy and a method that is inculcated into all practitioners of military strategy. The heart of the strategy is based on building relationships, reinforcing legitimate institutions, building security-force capabilities, sharing intelligence and information, developing focused civil-military

⁴¹⁴ Petit, “OEF-Philippines: Thinking COIN, Practicing FID,” 12.

⁴¹⁵ 1st Special Forces Group, “The History of the 1st SF Group in the Republic of the Philippines: 1957–2002” (*Special Warfare Magazine*, June 2002), 14–15.

programs, and aggressively promoting local acts of good governance. The indirect approach requires the discreet application of U.S. influence and assistance. Leaders continually calibrate the political implications of their actions, and quickly implement adjustments at the local level.”⁴¹⁶

E. WEAPONS / TECHNOLOGY

1. Anti-Government Forces

The anti-government forces operating throughout the Philippine Islands have truly operated with an irregular attitude towards weapons and technology. They have sought to leverage an advantage using already-existing technologies. These organizations have neither the ways nor the means to develop new technologies that can directly challenge the GRP or AFP, so they must therefore make do with what is available. This situation has produced interesting results in three areas: weapons, explosives, and information operations.

For weapons, the anti-government forces rely on small arms and light indirect fire assets acquired by any means possible. It is estimated that the MILF has roughly 8,000 firearms, and that the ASG has approximately 400.⁴¹⁷ For example, many weapons have been acquired from past conflicts, such as WWII, captured from the AFP, and/or purchased from external sources throughout the region. In terms of weaponry, there are no truly significant aspects of acquisition or operations other than what is normally seen during a guerrilla conflict.

One area of interest is the significant use of explosives during this conflict. Bombs are routinely used to attack the AFP, the GRP, and civilians, both inside and outside of the sanctuary areas. Some of the most notable examples are the Super Ferry 14 bombing and the Rizal Bombings on 30 December 2000—where five simultaneous explosions killed 22 and injured over 120 people. The three U.S. casualties killed in action by the enemy in the Philippines were all killed by bombs: one was killed by a motorcycle-borne suicide bomb, and an improvised explosive device that destroyed their

⁴¹⁶ Petit, “OEF-Philippines: Thinking COIN, Practicing FID,” 11.

⁴¹⁷ Peña and Naval Postgraduate School (U.S.), *Finding the Missing Link to a Successful Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy [Electronic Resource]*, 17–21.

military vehicle killed the other two.⁴¹⁸ In 2007, the Human Rights Watch organization published a report on the victims of bombings and militant violence within the Philippines since 2000.

“Since January 2000, violent Islamist groups in the Philippines have carried out over 40 major bombings against civilians and civilian property, mostly in the south of the country. Attacks on Mindanao, Basilan, Jolo, and other southern islands have killed nearly 400 civilians and injured well over a thousand more. Bombs have been set off in urban centers, markets, and stores, airports, on ferryboats and wharfs, and on rural roads and highways. They have killed Philippine civilians indiscriminately, Christians and Muslims, men and women, parents and children, and left behind orphans, widows, and widowers. Hundreds of other victims have suffered severe wounds, burns, and lost limbs. In all, bombings against civilians in the Philippines have caused over 1,700 casualties in the last seven years, more than the number of people killed and injured in bombing attacks during the same period in neighboring Indonesia (including the 2002 Bali bombings), and considerably more than the number of those killed and injured in bombings in Morocco, Spain, Turkey, or Britain.”⁴¹⁹

These numbers show the extensive use of explosive attacks throughout the conflict. The fact that the largest number of victims are civilians and not AFP or U.S. military, underlines the point that terrorism is one of the most prevalent tactics and lines of operation in the strategy of the anti-government forces.

A second area that the SPSG and Islamic terrorist organizations have taken advantage of is in the realm of information operations. These organizations have taken advantage of the World Wide Web to recruit, promote operations, spread propaganda, and galvanize the population to support their cause. In using the Internet, these organizations have found a medium which is difficult for the government to control, easy for the population to access, and easy for the organizations to update without significant exposure.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ United States Army Special Operations Command, *USASOC Fallen Heroes*, <http://www.soc.mil/Memorial%20Wall/oef-p.html> (accessed 1 November 2011)

⁴¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Lives Destroyed: Attacks Against Civilians in the Philippines*, (Human Rights Watch, 2007) www.hrw.org (accessed 1 November 2011), 3.

⁴²⁰ MILF Central Committee on Information, *MILF Official website*, <http://www.luwaran.com/home/> (accessed 1 November 2011)

2. Government Forces

The AFP and the U.S. military in the Philippines have executed a remarkably low campaign budget in the Southern Philippines. It is reported that the U.S. spends \$52 million a year on OEF-P. By contrast, the wars in Iraq cost \$100 Billion a year, and in Afghanistan \$30 Billion.⁴²¹ In 1989, the U.S. supported the Philippines with over \$300 million dollars in economic, military, and land reform aid, while simultaneously beginning the closure of U.S. bases and the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Philippine islands. By 1992, all U.S. bases in the Philippines were closed.⁴²² After 9/11, President Arroyo “accepted President George W. Bush’s offer of \$100 million in military assistance (including a C-130 turboprop aircraft and 30,000 M-16 rifles) and \$4.6 Billion in economic aid. She also stated that she would allow the U.S. military to advise, train, and assist the AFP in the fight against the ASG.”⁴²³ While this is a large sum of money to be used in the war on terror, remarkably little was spent on high-end technology. For the most part, the money was spent on supporting the force and keeping operations running. For example, in 2003, the U.S. State Department gave the AFP a \$25 Million counter-terrorism grant. This money was spent on building the capacity and capability of the Light Reaction Companies, the AFP’s top-tier counter terror unit. “The AFP soldiers were outfitted with reinforced vests, weapons, and other gear. The grant also paid for ammunition and shooting practice.”⁴²⁴ Despite a high degree of support from the U.S. military, in many situations the AFP still has to work with what they have. As reported by the author Max Boot, “The Philippine Armed Forces are sorely restricted in their capacity for precision bombing. Several Philippine and American soldiers we spoke with expressed frustration that the Philippine armed forces lack armed Predator drones, AC-130 gunships, satellite-guided Joint Direct Attack Munitions, and other high-tech U.S.

⁴²¹ Boot and Bennet, “Treading Softly in the Philippines,” 8.

⁴²² Cherilyn A. Walley, *A Century of Turmoil: America’s Relationship with the Philippines*, (Special Warfare, September 2004) 4.

⁴²³ Walley, “Impact of Semipermissive Environment on Force-Protection in Philippine Engagements,” 36.

⁴²⁴ Juliana Gittler, *Philippine Soldiers Show Off What They learned From The Green Berets*, (Stars and Stripes, 14 December, 2003) <http://www.stripes.com/news/philippine-soldiers-show-off-what-they-learned-from-the-green-berets-1.14479> (accessed 1 November 2011)

weapons that could more quickly finish off terrorist leaders. But the Philippine government isn't willing to pay for this fancy gear, and the U.S. government hasn't been willing to donate it."⁴²⁵

Outside of the traditional weapons of the AFP (small arms, explosives, indirect fire systems including artillery and mortars, armored and unarmored vehicles, and aviation attack and support), the AFP has tried new technologies on an old problem. Two areas where technology has been leveraged against the problem by the AFP are information operations and intelligence gathering.

The AFP, like its adversaries, has also learned that the Internet and cellular phone services are an efficient way of making contact with the population, which is being contested for by both the insurgents and the government. For example, the AFP has initiated a text messaging campaign that encourages the population to participate in peace promotion programs, and to report information on enemies of peace.⁴²⁶

The use of aerial surveillance platforms, including the U.S. P3 Orions,⁴²⁷ and small Unmanned Aerial Vehicles,⁴²⁸ by the AFP to conduct surveillance and reconnaissance against insurgents has been documented during the last decade. Though this technology may be assisting in gathering intelligence, it certainly has not turned the tide in favor of the AFP, nor has it alleviated the need to gather intelligence through traditional means, or the need to put boots on the ground to clear, hold, consolidate, and develop.

⁴²⁵ Boot and Bennet, "Treading Softly in the Philippines," 7.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁴²⁷ AFP Press Release, *U.S. Planes Conduct Aerial Surveillance on Hostage Island: Philippines*, AFP, February 27, 2002, <http://www.lynnellen.com/p3orion/news/feb02.html> (accessed 1 November 2011)

⁴²⁸ The Mindanao Examiner, *U.S. Spy Plane Crashes in Southern Philippines*, (Mindanao Examiner, 23 October, 2008)

F. ANALYSIS / CONCLUSION

GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR			
Force	ANTI- GOVERNMENT	AFP	US
Small Units	X	HYBRID	X
Comparatively Under Resourced	X		
Irregular Tactics / Doctrine	X	X	X
Terrorism	X		
Leveraging existing Technology	X	X	HYBRID
Protracted Conflict	X	X	X
Attrition Objectives	X	X	X

Figure 11. GWOT irregular warfare characteristics

The three major players in the Global War on Terror era in the Philippines have all exhibited a high degree of irregular warfare thinking in the implementation of their strategies. The Anti-government forces have organized clandestinely, taken advantage of safe havens, and utilized near and far attacks in an attempt to discredit the GRP's legitimacy, while simultaneously increasing their own legitimacy. The GRP has built a robust special operation capability throughout the entire AFP. These SOF forces have been routinely utilized to use their irregular warfare skills to help combat the irregular threat in the South. The United States has played the dual roles of player and strong influencer of GRP action during the war on terror. After 9/11, U.S. financial support and military support to the AFP increased dramatically. The largest example is the JSOTF-P, which has been conducting its mission continuously for over a decade. This special operations task force is quintessentially irregular, using all facets of non-conventional warfare to wage a protracted, slow burning war against terror organizations. The era of the war on terror is an excellent example of three different players who all understand

irregular warfare in context: they all understand the benefits and limitations of such a strategy, and work within these limits to achieve political goals.

By looking at the organization, the doctrine, and the use of technology, we have seen that all of the characteristics of irregular warfare are present in this most recent period. Both the anti-government and government forces have used small units in their fight, either for survival or tactical necessity. Some large units have been used, creating hybrid scenarios; mainly these are by the AFP using larger conventional units to conduct counterinsurgency and population resource control operations.

Tactically, both sides have routinely used irregular warfare. Guerrilla tactics, insurgent operations, terrorism, and special operations have played a prominent role in the GWOT. These tactics have been used in support of prolonged campaigns that aim to wear down the opposition, to attrite them out of the fight. For the AFP, because the enemy resides within the population, annihilation is not an option. If lasting peace is ever to be had, a willing population must be a part of the solution. For anti-government forces, the prolonged conflict and attrition stems from their dominant issue of being under resourced, especially when compared to the AFP with their U.S. backing.

In technological terms, the anti-government forces have—again, due to lack of resourcing—resorted to the more traditional guerrilla characteristic of making do with what is available. Often they have tried to leverage what is on hand, primarily by using whatever means available to make and use bombs for terrorism. On the government side, the AFP has benefited from U.S. technological support. Specifically, we have seen how the U.S. has supported intelligence with UAVs, and also contributed greatly to the civil military operation resourcing throughout the Southern Islands.

In all, the era is a good example of the Filipino way of war, and it demonstrates a continued reliance on irregular warfare well into the 21st century.

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VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“This country has been and is very rich in guerrilla activities.”

-Robert T. Yap-Diangco⁴²⁹

The idea of this thesis was to conduct an exploratory study of Filipino military history with the purpose of identifying a Filipino Way of War. Beginning in Filipino prehistory, and then tracing history through the colonial, Japanese occupation, post - independence, and global war on terror eras, a common thread has been identified. This is that irregular warfare strategy has played a dominant role in Filipino military action. By understanding this Filipino method, or way of war, we are then better able to understand the nature of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and anti-Philippine Government organizations. With a more complete understanding of the background of Filipino military operations, it is expected that a better perspective for future operations will be gained. Better perspective brings along increased organizational understanding, operational efficiency, and a greater potential for mission success. Most importantly understanding the inherent tendencies of the organization will allow us to identify strengths and weaknesses of possible strategies against threats to the Philippine Nation.

In order to identify irregular warfare, we have deduced a set of characteristics that could be found throughout Filipino warfare history. These characteristics were developed by cross comparing the work of Dr. John Arquilla and Russell Weigley on military strategy. Weigley's *The American Way of War* is important to this study, because it outlines the antithesis of irregular warfare. His study of American military strategy sets a good definition of total warfare, or warfare with the goal of annihilation. His model says that annihilation warfare is the act of applying overwhelming military power directly at an enemy, with the goal of totally destroying their ability to make war. Once an enemy is annihilated, then political will can be applied without opposition. In application, this type of warfare is demonstrated when large militaries use mass formations and firepower directly against the enemy. In this warfare, the units of action are armies, divisions, fleets,

⁴²⁹ Yap-Diangco, *The Filipino Guerrilla Tradition*, vii.

air wings, and large weapon systems. These types of forces must be well-resourced, operationally and logistically, or they can only have limited hopes for success. This becomes another characteristic of conventional warfare: the well-resourced force. A large force is expensive, difficult to operate, and difficult to maintain, therefore the desired effect for it is a quick and decisive victory. The sooner that the conflict is over, the better the result is for the nation that wields these forces. The best example of this is the large militaries of World War II. Overwhelming amounts of resources were necessary to maintain the martial effort, therefore, the quickest way to victory was much sought after. An interesting aspect of conventional warfare is that well-resourced and funded forces often look to technological advancement in weapons to gain advantage over other conventional militaries.⁴³⁰

In contrast, because those without the capacity or capability for large-scale conventional war more commonly execute irregular warfare, the characteristics are markedly different. Units tend to be small for the sake of survival and tactical circumstances. Tactics and doctrine for irregular forces take advantage of the small size, as well as the nature and purpose of the unit. Generally, these tactics take the form of guerrilla, insurgent, or special operations. Because these forces are vulnerable to large conventional militaries, due to their size and nature, they must often require longer and more protracted conflict. This allows them to gain resources and attack when the opportunity is right. Because the irregular force is not able to annihilate a larger, better-resourced opponent or achieve a quick and decisive victory over them, they must more commonly seek to attrite their enemies. They seek to diminish their enemies' capacity or will to fight over time through many small victories. These small victories add up, until the larger victory is achieved. These two styles of warfare are shown side-by-side in Figure 12. ⁴³¹

⁴³⁰ Weigley, *The American Way of War*, xx.

⁴³¹ Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, 6.

	Conventional Warfare		Irregular Warfare
Units	Large (Divisions, Fleets, Wings)	↔	Small (Cellular, Light, Fast)
Supported	Well Resourced	↔	Comparatively Under Resourced
Doctrine	Joint Combined Arms Maneuver Warfare	↔	Guerrilla Tactics, Insurgency, Terrorism, Special Operations
Effect	Quick and Decisive	↔	Protracted and Slow Burning
Objective	Annihilation	↔	Attrition
Technology	New Weapons Development	↔	Leverage what is Available

Figure 12. Comparison of conventional and irregular warfare characteristics

Terrain or geography and the nature of the threat certainly does play a role in the choice of strategy used. This is particularly true throughout the history of Philippine warfare, which has taken place in a region classed as very difficult terrain for any military operation. Thick jungles, mountainous ranges, and the vast island archipelago consisting of over seven thousand islands certainly have had some impact on the military thinking of the Filipino warrior. However, these factors, terrain and threat, are not the only factors involved in strategy choice. They are combined with the sum of the organizations character. In this case, it is over five hundred years of Filipino irregular warfare practice. The Filipino warrior does weigh the situation specific factors but he frames them with his combined experiences and traditions. An outside example where organizational character sways strategy choices in the face of geography and threat is the U.S. war in Vietnam. The United States military when faced with an irregular and later hybrid enemy in difficult terrain chose strategy based upon their tradition and organizational character. For the U.S., this was the use of large conventional forces very well resourced to annihilate the enemy. This strategy had been successful in World War I and II and reasonably successful in the Korean War. The U.S. military did develop irregular capability and capacity during the Vietnam War because of terrain and threat, but it did not become the primary American strategy.

Another later example of this with the United States is in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan where despite the irregular nature of the conflicts, the U.S. military used conventional strategy. Only later in the wars, when conventional strategy was failing, did irregular operations become more prevalent. The U.S. military is the most well resourced militaries in history, and is able to simultaneously sustain conventional and irregular forces in their inventory. This allows the U.S. military to toggle between strategies based upon terrain, threat, or circumstance. Even now as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan end, there is a renewed call to return to roots and refocus on classic combat skills, the American tradition of high-intensity conventional maneuver warfare.

Neither terrain, threat, nor traditions are singularly responsible for the Filipino irregular way of war. All three must be taken into account holistically to understand the nature of the Filipino warrior. Throughout military history, the Filipino warrior has fought on the same terrain consistently throughout every conflict. Cultural tradition is also generally consistent, slowly evolving over the centuries. The threats have been more varied by nature, spanning the warfare spectrum from the highly conventional to the highly irregular. Yet despite the differences in threats, irregular warfare has been prevalent in every era.

When comparing conventional and irregular warfare an exception can be found. This exception is a scenario where a large standing conventional military conducts irregular warfare. This is most commonly seen in the form of special operations. When a large military uses small units, irregular doctrine, and seeks irregular effects and objectives, such as protracted conflicts and attrition, (Figure 12) they are using a hybrid strategy.⁴³² According to Dr. John Arquilla, when executing a hybrid strategy, a military planner must have “a willingness to recognize both the mixed nature of many military campaigns and, frequently, the just-off-stage presence of substantial conventional forces.”⁴³³ Because there are significant differences in the effects, objectives, and methods of these two strategies, it is most important for the military planner and executer

⁴³² Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, 12.

⁴³³ Ibid.

to understand which strategy these are using, and when the strategy is hybrid. When it is hybrid, there must be recognition of when and how each method is being implemented, and for what purpose.

Throughout the five eras of Filipino warfare addressed in this study, we have followed a distinctive trend in Filipino irregular warfare. In each era, the fundamentals of Dr. John Arquilla's definition, and the identified characteristics of irregular warfare, are present. This definition, and these characteristics, arise from a military situation where at least one of the belligerents is at a distinctive disadvantage—one where they do not possess the means or might to directly challenge their rival. Without the ability to directly challenge, they must therefore look for an indirect method of challenge. These indirect challenges often include the three characteristics, or legs, of irregular warfare: small units, guerrilla or special operations tactics, and terrorism.⁴³⁴ This study has distinctly traced how irregular warfare has been the dominant form of warfare conducted by the Filipino warrior for centuries. This strategy of warfare has always stemmed from a lack of resources. Both anti-government and government forces have used irregular warfare strategies to make up for a lack of military resources and/or an inability to directly attack and annihilate their enemies. Despite the lack of military resources, both sides have harnessed what is available in abundance for victory: the Filipino population.

⁴³⁴ Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, 6.

ERA	Pre-Colonial	Spanish Colonial	American Colonial	Japanese Occupation	Post-Independence		GWOT	
Force	Filipino	Filipino Revolutionaries	Filipino Revolutionaries	Fil-Am Guerrillas	Anti GRP	AFP	Anti GRP	AFP
Small Units	X	X	X	X	X	HYBRID	X	HYBRID
Under Resourced	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Irregular Tactics	X	X	X	X	X	HYBRID	X	X
Terrorism					X		X	
Leverage existing Technology	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Protracted Conflict	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Attrition Objectives	X	X	X	X	X		X	X

Figure 13. Irregular warfare characteristics through the Filipino warfare eras

When the characteristics are presented, it is seen that all of them are represented, in every era, by at least one of the participants. Terrorism is considered an irregular tactic, but it is broken out here because of its sensitivity. In the later eras, when the conflicts are Filipino versus Filipino, all of the characteristics continue to be seen, at times from both sides of the conflict. Importantly, we have seen that the organization and tactics are a result of the units being relatively under resourced and needing to conduct a protracted and attrition based campaign. Two of Dr. Arquilla's three legs of the irregular warfare triad, small units and irregular tactics, are present through the full range of history—never all at once, or in every occasion—however, with enough regularity to support our conclusion. Terrorism, his third leg, has only become prevalent in the second half of the twentieth century.

Through the analysis of organization, doctrine, and use of technology, we have identified a growth stream for the method of war. Filipinos have commonly used small

units in order to maximize survivability against better-resourced opponents. Hand-in-hand with small units, Filipinos regularly employed guerrilla and or special operations tactics—for example, by hiding among the population or within a safe haven, and then striking against the enemy when opportunity presented itself, and finally returning back to safety. This tactical pattern is commonly seen in every era.

The Filipino irregular way of war began with the tribal foundation of the *barangay* battle culture that, by analogy, created a kind of irregular warfare cultural DNA in the Filipino makeup. The Spanish and American colonial periods were a sort of adolescent time for Filipino irregular warfare, a time when lessons were hard-learned as the Filipino warrior tested what irregular warfare could accomplish. The Japanese occupation can be likened to a finishing school for Filipino irregular warfare. During the Japanese occupation, guerrilla warfare was extensive throughout the Philippine Islands, and multiple types of irregular warfare were conducted by many different organizations. This was a true coming-of-age period, where a majority of the Filipino population was exposed to the method and effectiveness of this style of warfare. Along this same line of thought, the post-independence period, which included the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, can be thought of as the adult years of Filipino irregular warfare. During this time, many different organizations, including the Philippine government, used irregular warfare to compete for political goals.

There is a certain maturity that coincides with the regularity or commonality of the use of irregular warfare in the modern Philippines. This comes from the slow growth and complete acceptance of this style of warfare by the Filipino culture over the centuries. How long will this adulthood last? This is uncertain; we cannot know until it is over. What is important is that analysis is conducted and understood—then used to increase self-awareness, and adjust operations accordingly.

Filipino history shows that battle can often be characterized as being between the weak and the strong. Due to an inherent lack of resources, the weak have had to resort to unconventional methods in confronting the strong, in order to offset their disadvantages, and prolong the conflict. When using irregular warfare, the weak are trying to buy time to become stronger or achieve parity with their opponents. It is to the advantage of the weak

to prolong the conflict, and simultaneously, make the cost higher for the stronger opponent. Hence, the strong will always prefer a quick and decisive outcome to the war.

This history can have practical application to today's Philippine military environment. Contemporary history has shown how the AFP has evolved, particularly in terms of organization and tactics/doctrine/strategy, to adapt to the demands of current conflicts. More than demonstrating the use of small units and special operations units, the AFP has shown that a mix of conventional and unconventional approaches can be used successfully to fight a largely unconventional conflict.

Future threat to the Philippine nation will not necessarily come in the form of an irregular conflict. Generally, any military threat will come from either an external or an internal source, and will take the form of a conventional threat, an irregular threat, or some form of hybrid.

	External	Internal
Conventional	Possible, Low Likelihood Most Dangerous (PRC, Malaysia, Vietnam)	Least Likely Dangerous (AFP coup d'état, Well resourced insurgency)
Irregular	Moderately Likely Moderate Danger (JI, AQ, LET)	Most Likely Significant Danger (MILF, ASG, CPP, NPA)

(organizations listed are possible examples)

Figure 14. Philippine National Threats

In Figure 14, we have simplified and categorized the threats in order to conceptualize each. According to this categorization, there are four possible threat scenarios. Each has its own unique attributes, risk, and potential. An external conventional threat is possible because there are South East Asian regional powers that have the capacity and capability to produce a military that could invade the Philippines. While the likelihood of this is low, it is possible and must be considered. If a large

conventional military did invade the Philippines, we considered this the most dangerous scenario. This is primarily because the AFP conventional formations are generally quite limited, and have a restricted ability to force project outside of the archipelago. An internal conventional threat is also possible, but considered the least likely threat. This threat would have to come from either a rogue AFP unit or a very well resourced anti-government force. This is a dangerous scenario but within the capabilities of the AFP to respond to. Opposite to conventional threats, irregular threats have a seemingly higher likelihood. Considering that, external and internal irregular threats are currently ongoing in the Philippines. An external irregular threat has a moderate likelihood because there are very few irregular organizations in existence that are also transnational. JI, AQ, and the LET are a few examples from recent history. If this threat did exist, it would pose a danger to the Philippines, but could be contained. Most likely is an internal irregular threat of which there are a number ongoing in the Philippines. This threat also poses the most danger, because an irregular threat requires sanctuary among the population and by definition, an internal threat means that some form of the population is already willing to accept the irregular threat as legitimate and the government as de-legitimate. Meaning the threat group already has some portion of the population that will protect and enable them.

It is important to understand how the AFP is capable of dealing with each of the four threats described. Does the Filipino irregular way of war have limitations or advantages when confronted with any of these threats?

External	
Conventional	AFP would be at a significant initial disadvantage, must rely on external support (MDT), which has risks. AFP can deter with SOF irregular capabilities, or defend in depth using conventional and irregular organization.
Irregular	AFP fully capable of combating with current strengths in irregular warfare, combined with hybrid conventional and police organizations.
Internal	
Conventional	AFP would be able to combat and regain control from any rogue conventional unit, with current capabilities, using either irregular or hybrid strategies. Equally AFP can combat any well resourced insurgency with irregular and conventional hybrid capabilities.
Irregular	AFP fully capable of combating with current strengths in irregular warfare, combined with hybrid conventional and police organizations.

Figure 15. The Filipino way of war against potential national threats

Against either internal or external irregular threats, the irregular nature of the AFP and the Filipino way of war would function well. The AFP would be fully capable of combating irregular threats with current organization, tactics, and technology. Certain aspects would have to be adjusted for the specifics of the threat, terrain, and environment, but the baseline makeup would be sufficient. If necessary, this irregular capability could also be combined with AFP conventional capability, national police, and the justice system to fully combat the irregular threat. An internal conventional threat likewise could also be contained and combated without major adjustments to the current AFP. This is assuming that the internal threat would be of sufficiently limited size that the AFP would still have the advantage in resources. An external conventional threat is the most dangerous; because it offers the scenario that the AFP is least organized to combat. Most of the Philippines conventional deterrent relies upon direct support from the United States as required by the Mutual Defense Treaty. This offers risk to the AFP because it is relying on a third party that, likely would, but hypothetically, may not honor the agreement. The AFP could deter with its own irregular SOF forces, but this would require

an increase force projection capability. The most likely scenario would be a conflict similar to the Japanese occupation of World War II. An initial conventional defense could be established, if defeated, then the AFP could continue by waging a guerrilla conflict, until enough resources and support could be mustered to directly challenge the enemy.

One of the more interesting aspects of the Filipino irregular way of war is resistance to the American way of war. The United States has certainly imparted a significant amount of influence on the AFP over the last century. After the U.S.'s successful COIN campaign of 1898–1902, and throughout the American colonial period and the post-independence period, the U.S.-directed development of the AFP would be along the lines of the conventional American model.⁴³⁵ The most significant influence would come in the structure of the AFP organization, which would be modeled directly like the U.S. military. With this type of organization came an implied military strategy: conventional warfare. At this stage of military development, there was no reason to believe that the American way of war was not the superior way of war. U.S. success in World War II had established the dominance of the U.S. in military affairs and solidified the importance of annihilation warfare.

The Philippines was declared a commonwealth by the United States in 1935, but true independence would have to wait.⁴³⁶ Post World War II, the Filipino people gained their long sought after independence, and with it, a completely new series of internal conflicts. While the U.S. had granted autonomous rule, American business and military influence was still strong throughout these transition years.⁴³⁷ The United States continued to maintain large naval and air bases on the Philippine islands. With the Cold War heating up in the Pacific, the United States and the Philippines were committed to an alliance to defend each other from any external threat through the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951. In application, the MDT meant that the United States would secure the Philippines and respond to any invasion—but in return, the U.S. would use the Philippines as a key lager and staging area. The U.S. and the Philippines maintained a

⁴³⁵ Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, 15–69.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 195–203.

⁴³⁷ Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*, 99–100.

robust cooperative alliance during this time, with the Philippine army even contributing to the U.S. wars in Korea and Vietnam.⁴³⁸ Out of this relationship was the largest period of conventional growth for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Resourced, trained, and mentored by the United States, the AFP grew their conventional capabilities for future Cold War combat.

The U.S. model is seen primarily in the organization of the conventional and special operations units within the AFP. In the Army, for example, which is the oldest service in the AFP, standard organizations are the divisions, brigades and battalions. The major arms in the service are the infantry, artillery, and armor, supported by the engineers and support services. Special operations units of the AFP include the Army's Scout Rangers, Special Forces, and Light Reaction Battalion, along with the Navy's special warfare group (equivalent of the U.S. Navy SEALs). Their general makeup and purpose is modeled directly after the United States military. Despite these organizational similarities, irregular warfare has remained highly dominant for two very specific reasons. First, despite that, the organization of the AFP was created for conventional warfare; it was not resourced properly for success in it by the GRP. Second, the conflicts that the AFP was involved in during the second half of the 20th century were internal conflicts of an irregular nature, conflicts that dictated a non-conventional or hybrid solution instead of an annihilation solution.

In contemporary times, the Philippine environment would suggest that the threat to the nation's security continues to come from largely internal threats, potentially supported by external actors. These internal threats are likely to continue well into the immediate future. For as long as socio-economic problems, the so-called root causes, remain unresolved, there is always a significant portion of the population that will help insurgents thrive. If the Philippines' 2011 Human Development Index (HDI),⁴³⁹ is used as a gauge, the percentage of population below the income poverty line is 22.6, and the percentage of population vulnerable to poverty is 9.1. These percentages, out of a current

⁴³⁸ Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*, 100–101.

⁴³⁹ The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living.

projected population of 94.01M,⁴⁴⁰ as of 2010 census, represent roughly 29.8M. This provides some idea of the vast numbers of the population that are deprived, marginalized and therefore, vulnerable to ideological/religious motivations to go against the government. In other words, resolving the socio-economic root causes of the existing insurgency problems remains an enormous challenge, considering the current environment. While it is just one among many other factors that relate to an insurgency, poverty cannot be easily discounted. This then presents a perpetual problem for the Philippines. It further indicates that insurgency will likely be an ongoing problem for the Philippine government and the military.

The problem of insurgency, reckoned from the time of the founding of the CPP/NPA and the MILF, has already managed to exist for almost four decades. Throughout this period, its cost to the Philippine government and to society cannot be overemphasized. In the Mindanao conflict alone, the number of people killed between 1970 and 1996 is estimated at 100,000.⁴⁴¹ Likewise, for the same period, the AFP is said to have spent Php73 Billion, or an average of 40% of its annual budget, on the conflict in Mindanao.⁴⁴² In the more recent war with the MILF in 2000, the then National Security Adviser Roilo Golez placed the cost at Php 6 Billion, at least.⁴⁴³ Relative to its impact on the economy, the Presidential Assistant for Regional Development, Paul Dominguez, told a civil-society forum in April 2002 on the cost of the Mindanao conflict that the economic cost of the continuing conflict would be at least \$2 Billion over the next 10 years.⁴⁴⁴ This amount does not include the costs for fighting the communist insurgency

⁴⁴⁰ Projected population according to the 2010 census by the National Census Office (NSO), Republic of the Philippines. The NSO has yet to release its final report on the 2010 census.

⁴⁴¹

and other threat groups, which is also substantial. What is clear is that the funds lost to these conflicts could have been used for other Philippine domestic priorities, including various development programs.

Notwithstanding the costs, the ongoing conflict also presents the danger of apathy, not only to the Philippine society, but more so to the AFP. The duration of the conflict has reached a point where it is generally accepted as a normal function of life in the Philippines. Consequently, this presents the risk of losing that sense of urgency needed to end the conflict, or to contain it to a level where it no longer poses a challenge to Philippine society. Given the other factors required to address the insurgency, the holistic government and non-government stakeholders in society must increase their contribution to a solution, and not simply rely on a military solution.

A practical military implication for the AFP is that fact that irregular warfare is likely to remain the nature/character of their conflicts. This emphasizes the need for a continuing—and more effective—AFP capability to conduct counter-guerrilla operations. This need would be best supported by additional training focused on small-unit tactics and leadership, and intelligence. An emphasis on civil-military operations and psychological operations would also complement combat operations.

Furthermore, the current talks between the Philippine government and the insurgent groups put primacy on the peace process as a solution to end the conflict, as embodied in the latest Internal Peace and Security Plan “Bayanihan.”⁴⁴⁵ While the AFP abides with the national policy, it is crucial to recognize that the best way that the Philippine government can negotiate for peace is from a position of strength. This means that the AFP must be successful in its campaigns against the armed components of the various threat groups. The AFP, while supportive of the peace initiatives, cannot afford to endure debacles such as the October 2011, Basilan incident where the government forces lost 19 soldiers. Such incidents erode the public’s confidence in the AFP, as well as the government, while it emboldens armed groups. The AFP must increase its own legitimacy while simultaneously de-legitimize the various armed groups. Only then can

⁴⁴⁵ Internal Peace and Security Plan “Bayanihan”

the threat groups be compelled to seriously participate at the negotiating table and invoke peace. In order for the peace process to work, the AFP must demonstrate, unquestionably, that it can fight for peace.

By continuing to understand and develop a capacity for irregular warfare, the AFP will be better able to understand their adversaries. Thus, a more holistic counterinsurgency strategy can be developed, which focuses on placing responsibility for actions, a reliable justice system, rule of law, and reconciliation where appropriate. The continued incorporation of irregular warfare into AFP conventional warfare strategy will create more opportunity for success by building on organizational and cultural strengths. These conflicts should not be viewed as a competition between the organizations of the AFP, but a competition against all of the AFP and GRP. A holistic hybrid strategy will create successes by building on a predisposition for irregular warfare amongst the Filipino warriors. Setbacks must not create an excuse to abandon the strategy, but must foster self-reflection, and organizational growth. Had it not been for the Desert One Failure, USSOF may not have had the motivation or perspective needed to make changes which created, arguably, the finest special operations force in the history of warfare.

External defense remains a constitutional mandate for the AFP. Threats from external aggression, however, continue to be remote. In the event of an external aggression, the Philippines can rely on its 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty with the United States. Notwithstanding, given the state of the AFP's capability for external defense, the shift to guerrilla warfare, after conventional means have failed, will always remain a staple in the country's overall defense plan. The AFP, together with the population, will resort to the kind of warfare that has been in existence since its pre-colonial days: guerrilla warfare. To this end, history will most likely repeat itself.

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